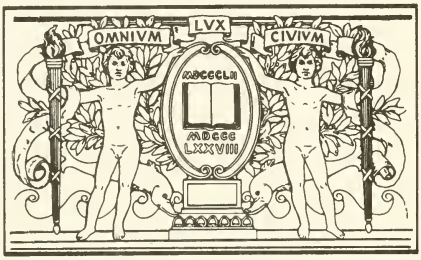
The Wonder-Children

Charles J. Bellamy



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From Aunt Mabel.

THE WONDER CHILDREN

The
Co.

THE WONDER CHILDREN

THEIR QUESTS AND CURIOUS ADVENTURES

BY

CHARLES J. BELLAMY

ILLUSTRATED

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THE WONDER CHILDREN

STORY OF A CHRISTMAS EVE

HELEN'S Christmas-tree was lighted up the afternoon of the day before Christmas. Her mother had given her a party, and all her little friends, both boys and girls, had been invited. The tree, with its hundreds of colored lights and gayly tinted balls and bells and wreaths of tinsel, each branch loaded until it fairly groaned with gifts small and big, had been set in the drawing-room carefully darkened as if it were indeed night.

The guests agreed that they had never before seen so beautiful a Christmas-tree. All the tints of the rainbow glowed among the green, while strings of glass beads and chains of polished metal glistened like rain-drops in the summer sun. The parents and friends of each of the guests had sent presents to be hung upon the tree or to be heaped

on the floor beneath, besides all that Helen's parents had provided.

After the tree had been stripped the company was led to the grand dining-room. The table looked almost like a flower-bed, yet space enough had been left for all the kinds of dainties which are best liked by children. The festival closed with games; and when the guests went away they all told the truth to the little hostess in saying that they had never before enjoyed so charming a Christmas Eve.

But Helen's choicest gifts had been saved until after her guests were gone. Among them were a doll as large as a child and dressed like a grown woman of fashion, a pair of silver skates, a beautiful little desk with chair just fitted to it in size, a set of furs, and a loving note from her father saying there was a new Shetland pony for her in the stable. But I will not stop to attempt so much as to mention more of them.

It is now half-past six o'clock and Helen is just finishing her tea in the nursery. She is quite alone. Her parents have both gone out for the evening; and the nurse, whose duty it was to attend to the little girl, is keeping her Christmas Eve down-stairs. It so

happened that of all her presents Helen had brought only one into the nursery with her; this was a fruit-knife which her uncle had found in a far Eastern country. Now, having finished her very light meal, the child took up the knife and looked it over, remembering how her uncle had said, when he gave it to her, that it was many thousand years old, the story being that it once belonged to a famous magician. She noticed some words engraved on the handle, and drew the knife close to her face while she tried to make them out. But no sooner had her breath fallen on the engraved words than the room suddenly brightened as if twice the lights had blazed up at once. As she raised her eyes she saw a wonderful creature dressed in long flowing garments, like a woman but more beautiful than any one she had ever seen.

"What do you want?" cried Helen springing from her chair in terror.

"What do *you* want?" repeated the strange visitor; "I am here to do your bidding."

"But I did not call you;" said Helen hesitating whether to stay for an answer or to run out of the room.

"Yes," answered the visitor, "when you breathed on the words in the handle of that knife still in your hand, then it was that you called me."

The now thoroughly frightened child was about to rush from the room, but the beautiful visitor put out her shapely white hand and, smiling very sweetly, said: "Do not be afraid of me, little girl; I am your friend. Listen and I will explain why it is that I come to you. That knife, which you hold in your hand, was made by a great magician more years ago than you can easily count. By his wonderful power, which people nowadays cannot understand, he so made it that when a little girl under ten years old breathes on the words engraved in the handle, I, or others like me, must straightway appear before her and offer to bring about whatever she asks. The knife has not been used in this way for hundreds of years because it has happened that it has long been in the hands of grown persons only, or because the children who may have owned it did not happen to breathe on the enchanted words as you have now done. But, after so long waiting, I am at last called to service. Whatever you ask of me it is my duty to do. If there is anything you

want you have only to speak and I will obtain it for you."

Helen was not by nature a timid child and, without further delay, she put her hand in that of her beautiful visitor saying: "So I can have anything I want?"

"Yes;" answered her visitor, smiling sweetly. "Now what is it?"

But Helen hesitated a moment before replying.

"This is very kind of you;" she said at last, in her most polite manner. "Can you spare me a little time to think?"

"Certainly;" answered the visitor. "I have two hours to spend with you."

"Well," said Helen at last, "come with me and see my new Christmas presents. Perhaps as I look them over I shall think of something to ask for."

So, hand in hand, the fairy and the little girl passed out of the nursery into the hall, and down the grand stairway to the still larger hall below, the floor of which was polished like ivory and nearly covered with rugs of the softest tints brought from the far East where it took nearly a lifetime to make them.

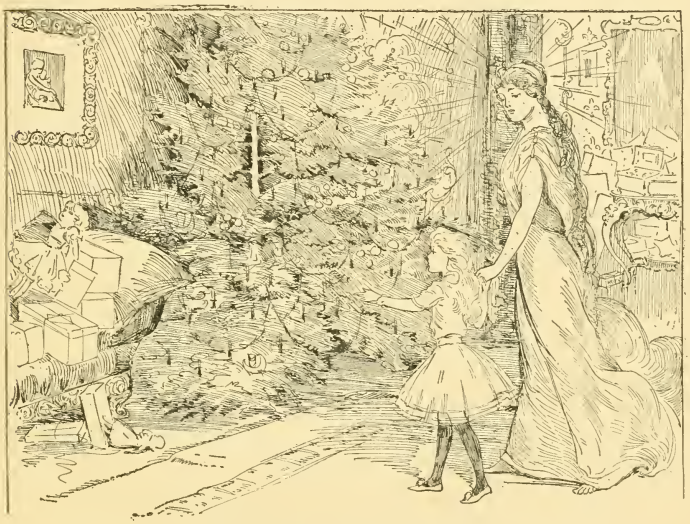
The door to the dining-room stood ajar, and within could be seen the long table still covered with the remains of the feast which forty children had lately enjoyed. The air of the room was heavy with the perfume of big bouquets of the rarest of flowers, while before each deserted seat was a bunch of beautiful blossoms which the more than satisfied little guests had not thought it worth while to take away with them.

But Helen eagerly drew her new friend into the drawing-room, the ceiling of which was painted to show the story of a famous poem and its side walls hung with beautiful pictures, while rare pieces of statuary or highly ornamented tables bearing costly vases stood here and there. At one end of the room stood the Christmas-tree, no longer shedding colored light from its electric bulbs, but still beautiful with ropes and wreaths of glittering tinsel and countless balls and bells of rainbow tints.

"Were all these presents given to you?" asked the fairy pointing to a couch on which many gifts had been carelessly thrown. "How kind your parents are!"

"Pooh!" answered the child; "these are nothing!

Papa and mamma didn't want to put my best things on the tree for fear of making the other children envious, you know. Come into the next room and I will show you my real presents." And,



HELEN SHOWS HER PRESENTS.

for the first time that night Helen actually appeared, for the moment, to take an interest in her good things as she thought to astonish somebody by showing them.

The little room to which the child and the fairy had now come was full of beautiful and costly articles

to each of which was fastened a card showing that it was for Helen with the love of father or mother or of some relative or close friend. This whole page is not large enough to name them. The fairy glanced from the many gifts to the child upon whom all these favors had been heaped.

"Your parents and friends love you very much. But you don't seem to be greatly pleased with all your good fortune. How is it?"

After thinking for a moment Helen answered: "Well, no. To tell the truth, I don't care much for any of my Christmas presents."

"But what would you have liked better?" asked the fairy. "You must know that you now have only to say what you really want, and as soon as the words are out of your mouth I can give it to you."

"I don't know of anything that I really want," said the child. "That is just my greatest trouble."

The fairy looked astonished and Helen hastened to explain. "You see I always have had everything before I had time really to want it, to say nothing of a great number of things which I never could have wanted. So now, when Christmas or my birthday comes, there is nothing I care for left to

give me. What is a Christmas good for if a girl doesn't want anything? It only makes me sad to think that I don't find the joy in Christmas which other children do."

The fairy, too, seemed to be saddened for a moment, and the brightness which had come from her dimmed as does the light from the sun when feathery clouds come before it. "My dear little girl," she said after a time, "I am afraid there is nothing I could bring you to make you any happier. Your parents are only too ready to heap gifts upon you. I see that in these days those who are very rich can do more than could the magicians of old." The fairy moved as if about to go. "So, if you do not mind, I will leave you. Fairies and enchantments are of no use to such children as you, I think. How different it used to be a few thousand years ago!" And the beautiful creature sighed.

But Helen clung tightly to her hand. "Are you sure there is nothing you could do for me? How many children there must be who would be glad to have the chance I don't seem to know how to use!"

A sudden idea seemed to strike the fairy. Instead now of trying to release herself from Helen's

clinging hand she bent her shining head and pressed a light kiss on the child's pure but troubled forehead.

"You have made me think of a plan;" she said. "Perhaps, since you find you want nothing for yourself, you would like to use your chance to help somebody else not as fortunate as you."

Helen clapped her hands with glee. "Yes, yes;" she cried jumping up and down in excitement, "that would be delightful. But how am I to know what these other people want or how to help them?"

"Suppose we visit some of them;" replied the fairy, now as calm and sweet as at first. "I can make both of us invisible, so those that we call on shall not know we are there. Then we can hear them talk and see for ourselves what would make them happy."

"But how far are we to go?" objected Helen, shrinking a little from a trip out into the night.

The fairy smiled. "Oh, as far or as near by as you choose. You know that everything is to go to-night by your wishes. Shall we start?"

Helen still hesitated. "But how am I to give people what they want just by wishing it?" she asked.

The fairy laughed out loud. "Why, my dear child, have you not read enough fairy stories to know that there are no 'hows' where fairies are concerned? Now I will guide you if you are ready to start."

Helen was quite too excited to speak, but she nodded her little head very bravely; and, in a moment more, enfolded in the loving arm of the fairy, she passed right through the thick stone walls of her house and floated down the street much as a bit of thistle-down floats on the gentle summer breeze.

As they were passing a gayly lighted house, Helen cried: "Let's wait here a minute and listen to the music. This is where papa and mamma are spending the evening. Oh, see the ladies and gentlemen dancing past the windows! What a fine time they are having!"

"So these people on the sidewalk seem to think;" answered the fairy. "Hear what they say."

"How happy people can be if they are rich!" said one.

"Oh, I wish I could live in a house like that;" said another.

The complaining ones did not look like persons

to be pitied, but Helen whispered to her new friend: "Why may I not make these people happy?"

The fairy replied: "You are free to give them what you choose, my dear; but I am very sure that what they are so envious of would not make them any happier if it was theirs."

So the fairy and child swept on until they came to the streets where the stores were all ablaze with lights and crowds of people were gazing into the show windows. It was in front of a candy-store that two ragged children stood looking greedily at the tempting piles of colored bonbons just behind the great panes of glass.

"Poor little things!" said Helen. "Why not stop and help them? Don't object; if I have any such power as you tell me I must use some of it now. I want these two poor children to have not only their candies but the other things which will take away that sad look on their faces."

The fairy smiled sweetly as she replied: "I obey your command. A messenger is already on the way; he will not only give them a happy Christmas Eve but will do his best to make their home much more pleasant than it has ever been."

From the Outside.

It was a few steps farther along that two well-dressed women stood before the windows of a fur store. One of them was saying: "Oh, I want that set of sealskins. I am sure I should be perfectly happy if it was mine."

Helen laid her hand on the arm of her new friend: "Let me help her. Surely I shall never find a better chance to do good. You see how unhappy she is. Why not give her the furs?"

"You may do so if you like;" answered the fairy, "but if you take my advice you will hasten to those who need you much more."

Then they rapidly sped away from the bright and gay streets and into the part of the city where the poorest people lived. The streets became narrow, dark and dirty; the houses were ugly blocks, twenty families living in twice as many rooms. The visitors were not hindered by walls, however solid they might look, but passed through brick as if it were nothing but air and finally stood in a room such as Helen had never seen before. Three or four broken windows were stuffed with old rags to keep out the crisp December air. The walls of the room were bare, and there was not so much as a scrap of carpet on

the rough and unpainted floor. The only furniture was a bed, with a cot beside it, a rude table, two or three wooden-seated chairs and an old kitchen stove in bad repair.

A man sat at the table from which the family had just eaten a scanty and uninviting meal of bread and water. His head was bowed over his hands and he seemed very unhappy. Two little children, both younger than Helen, were holding out their stockings to their mother to hang behind the stove.

"It's Christmas Eve you know, mother;" said the eight-year-old boy. "This is the night that Santa Claus comes and fills the stockings of good children with presents."

The mother wiped away a tear, and her voice sounded broken as she answered: "I'm afraid there is no use of hanging up your stockings to-night."

"Why, dear mamma," asked the little girl, who was two years younger, "haven't we been pretty good? We are sorry — aren't we, brother? — that we cried to-night because there was not bread enough for supper. But Santa wouldn't stay away just for that — when we are sorry."

The mother helplessly took the two pairs of

stockings from the uplifted hands. "I guess there are too many holes in the stockings;" she said at last, in a voice that did not sound like their mother's.

Then the father raised his pale face from his hands to say: "Why this nonsense? You know there will be nothing for them."

But at this the children began to cry; and Helen, whom none of them could see, cried too, shedding invisible tears, while the father again dropped his head in his hands but lower than before. The mother, without another word, took up a broken poker for a hammer, and tacked up the two pairs of ragged stockings behind the stove. Then the children climbed gleefully into their little bed. They were sure that dear Santa would come. Their only anxiety had been lest the mother would not make proper provision for the coming of the shy good genius of childhood.

As for Helen, she was crying so that she could scarcely find her voice to say: "Dear, good fairy, please do not refuse to help them."

"Be patient, my dear;" answered the fairy.

Now the father raised his head from his hands again, and said in a low tone to his wife: "Why did

you do it? You know as well as I that their poor little stockings will be empty in the morning. I can see their faces when they find that Santa Claus has forgotten them."

The mother did not look at him as she replied: "Yes, and so can I. But I saw no harm in sending them happy to bed. It will be bad enough in the morning for all of us."

"True enough;" said the father; "not a mouthful of food or a penny in the house, and even hope flown out of the window. Poor little things, they will cry so hard for their missing breakfast that they will soon forget about Santa's neglect." And he covered his eyes with his hand as if to shut out the sight.

"Perhaps to-morrow you can find some work by which you can earn money enough to feed us." And his wife added wistfully: "It takes so little just for that, you know."

"If only I could find my old friend," he replied, "there might be some hope. But you know how I have searched in vain for him. And nobody seems to want me. How cruel is a great city to a man or woman without friends!"

And now the children were both asleep with sweet

smiles on their faces as they dreamed about Santa Claus.

But Helen could endure the scene no longer. "I can't wait a minute more;" she cried; "Santa Claus must come right away."

A Call from Santa Claus.

The words were no sooner out of her mouth than a sharp knock was heard at the door.

"Come in;" called the father, without even looking around. He expected no visitor, unless, perhaps, some one asking him for money which he could not

pay. He feared most of all that it was the landlord come to say they must move out into the street.

The door opened and a burly figure entered.

"Good evening," said a cheery voice, "and a merry Christmas to all."

The father had turned in his seat ready to demand with angry words what sort of merry Christmas there could be for the poor; but a sight met his eyes that stopped the words on his lips.

The uninvited guest wore long white whiskers; his cheeks were cherry red, while laughing black eyes twinkled out from beneath shaggy gray eyebrows. He was clad in furs from top to toe, and carried on his back a big pack, through the open top of which could be seen all sorts of toys such as delight children. Without delay he swung his pack to the floor; but by this time, it may be believed, the mother had become very much interested.

"Merry Christmas to you, sir;" she said. "You must excuse us for being slow in answering your greeting, for it has been long since we have heard words so pleasant. And what brings you to this dreary place on so gay a night?"

"Are there not two good little children here?"

asked the bluff visitor. "I seldom make a mistake."

The father looked on speechless, but the mother, with brightened face, promptly replied: "Why, yes, there are no sweeter or better children in the whole world than our little girl and boy."

"Well, then," continued the visitor, looking inquiringly around the room, "I have brought a few things for them. Where are their stockings?"

The mother pointed to the wall behind the broken stove. "The children wanted so much to hang up their stockings that I let them;" she explained breathlessly. "But I told them not to expect anything."

The visitor bustled across the room with his pack, the mother keeping beside him. "There are big holes in the stockings;" said she sadly. "I could not mend them."

"Never mind that;" broke in the visitor; "what the stockings won't take, the floor will."

Just then the children in the cot were wakened by the strange voice, and both sat bolt upright gazing with wide-open eyes at the newcomer and his wonderful bag.

"It is Santa Claus;" whispered one.

"Yes;" answered the other; "and you know mamma thought he wouldn't find us away up here."

"But we mustn't let him know we saw him;" said the boy. "He might not like it."

So without another word the dear children lay down again in their little bed, shut their eyes, and went back to their dreams.

Santa Claus lost no time but began at once to take the most wonderful things out of his pack. First, of course, came boxes and horns of candy; — no child's Christmas would be right without candy. Then came bags of pop-corn, big oranges, and cookies of all sorts. Now the pack began to give forth still more delightful gifts; — trumpets and whistles, drums and harmonicas, dolls and dolls' clothes, toy wagons, Noah's arks, blocks, picture-books, lead soldiers, jumping-jacks, — until the space behind the dingy old kitchen stove looked like a toy-store. And all the while the father was trembling with excitement and the loving mother kept breaking out with words of delight and surprise. As for Helen, the invisible spectator of all the happiness which her wish had brought into this sad home, she

was clapping her hands every second and wondering because she made no noise.

But it seemed that Santa Claus had by no means finished when he had taken out of his wonderful pack the great supply of toys, candies and fruits. He next began to draw forth all sorts of tempting food; — a turkey and a pair of chickens all cooked and ready to eat, a delicious-looking jar of cranberry sauce, pies and cakes and plenty of good bread and butter. He then paused only long enough to get his breath when down he dived into another part of the big pack, and this time brought out mittens, reefers, coats, caps, stockings, even boots and shoes, until the room began to look like a clothing-store and bakery, with a toy annex behind the stove.

At last, when the remarkable visitor began to tie up his bag and make as if he were going out, the father started suddenly forward. "I did not believe in Santa Claus before," he said; "but I believe in him now, and he never came where he was needed more than here this evening. You don't know how grateful we are, or how happy the little ones will be in the morning."

Santa Claus cleared his throat as if uncertain

whether to laugh or cry. "Well, I'm glad I came. Good-bye, and a merry Christmas, again."

Having shouldered his pack he was turning the door-knob when Helen whispered to the fairy: "Don't let him go yet. Can't Santa find the man some nice place to work? Oh, please make him, dear fairy."

"Just as you say, my dear;" answered the fairy with a smile; and the words were no sooner out of her mouth than Santa Claus turned back into the room.

"I had forgotten something;" he said as he took off his pack again. "I have a letter here which I should give you."

After fumbling awhile in his big pockets he drew forth a sealed envelope and handed it to the father. Then he was gone so suddenly that it seemed as if he might have dropped through the floor.

For as much as a minute after the wonderful visitor had gone the father stood with the letter in his hand as if he did not know what to do with it. Then he said to his wife: "I don't know but I am dreaming."

She came close to him so she could look over

his shoulder as she answered: "We are both wide awake, my dear. But why don't you open your letter? It may be another pleasant surprise."

So he tore open the letter as if more afraid than hopeful of what should be in it, and this is what he read aloud: —

"Dear Friend, — I have just found out where you are. I need a man just like you, my old friend, in my office. Come the day after Christmas ready to go to work."

But when the father came to the name signed to the letter he was too much astonished to pronounce it. He merely let the sheet of paper flutter to the floor, murmuring: "This must be a dream."

"But who wrote the letter?" asked his excited wife. "Does this mean that our troubles are over?"

Then the husband caught his wife in his arms and kissed her again and again. "Yes, my dear, it means that all our troubles are past. This letter is from an old friend of mine, now one of the great merchants of the city. Don't you see? He has found out where I am and wants me to help him in his business. If we are not both dreaming, we shall

never again know what it is to be cold or hungry, suffering ten times worse in seeing our children suffer."

Just then there was a rustling sound from the cot and a voice piped up: "Has Santa Claus gone yet, mamma?" The children were awake and both sitting up in their bed, their faces flushed and their eyes shining with excitement and pleasure.

"Yes, darlings;" answered the mother, going up to the cot and bending over to kiss the sweet, eager faces; "Santa has gone, and he did not forget you."

"Then mayn't we get up," asked the boy, "and see what is in our stockings? Why need we wait till morning? Oh mamma, we saw him: didn't we, sister? But we didn't let him know."

"Yes, please let us get up, mamma;" chimed in the little girl. "We can't go to sleep again."

"Certainly;" said the father. "Let them get up this minute. You know Christmas only comes once a year;" and he laughed as gayly as a child.

So the mother helped the children put on enough clothing so they would not take cold, and soon they pattered across the bare floor to the array of wonderful gifts behind the stove.

"Oh, here is a doll!" cried the little girl, clapping her hands. "It must be for me: I did so want a doll."

"And here is a drum!" shouted the boy. "That must be for me: I thought I was never going to get a drum."

"And here is a set of little dishes!" cried the girl.

"And here is a box of lead soldiers!" shouted the boy.

"See the picture-books and the blocks!"

"Look at the trumpets and the tops!"

"The stockings are just full of candy."

"Oh, see these oranges!"

"These mittens just fit me."

"This cap is just my size."

"These beautiful shoes must be for me."

"And these boots must be mine."

Finally the father took the little girl in his lap, while the mother held the boy in hers, and each of the children rattled on about their wonderful Christmas Eve, and laughed at the old folks for having said there would be no use to hang up stockings. And the joy that shone on the faces of that father and mother no words can describe.

A very Merry Christmas.

Helen would have stayed much longer but the fairy reminded her that time was going fast.

"This is so happy a night for me!" said the girl. "But where are we going next? You seem to be taking me away from this block. Is there nobody left unhappy within these dismal walls?"

"Alas, my child," answered the fairy; "we could hardly go amiss. But my time is almost flown. You remember I told you when I first came that I had but two hours for you. Those two hours are now on their last minutes. I have barely enough time left to take you safely home before I must vanish."

As soon as they had reached Helen's nursery her beautiful friend bent down to kiss her good-bye. "I must now be on the wing."

"I never was so happy before," cried the child. "It was better than all the fine presents I have received in all my life."

"Good-bye;" said the fairy, moving away.

"Good-bye;" answered Helen; "but it will not be for long. Now that I know you, I shall call for you very often. Can't you come again to-morrow night?"

"As long as you keep your enchanted knife and

remain under ten years old you can call me whenever you wish, and I shall be glad to come; I have had vacation enough. It is a delight to me to do such things as you have asked for. Another little

The End of the Christmas Eve.

girl might not use the enchanted knife so well: be very careful not to lose it."

Helen began to look troubled as she glanced over the table. "I am afraid I took the knife with me in my hand; I hope I didn't lose it, but I don't see it about the room. Oh, what shall I do if it is lost?"

"Perhaps you may find it yet;" replied her friend, still moving away. "But, if you do not, just keep on doing what you have so much enjoyed doing to-night, — helping those who need help. You have found the secret of real happiness."

"But I am not a fairy;" said the child, ready to cry.

"You will find," smiled the beautiful visitor, "that the good you can do of your own self will give you the greatest happiness of all. Good-bye."

And the fairy was gone, while in her place, when Helen looked up again, was the nurse. "It is long past your bedtime, child;" said the woman. "Why didn't you call me? I have been having so pleasant a time down-stairs that I quite forgot you. You must have been lonesome."

"Oh no;" answered Helen, following her out of the nursery; "I have enjoyed every minute."

STORY OF THE THREE FISHES

IT is a sad thing for a boy to be left without a father and mother, but that is what happened to Harry Bolton when he was only ten years old. His father died first; his mother had a hard time for two years earning enough money to buy food and clothes for herself and her boy; then she also fell sick and died.

Harry's uncle was not a very kindly man, and he had a large family of his own to care for; so, although he made a home for Harry, the boy could not help thinking that his uncle did not love him, and that his aunt wished him out of the way. His cousins, too, were not agreeable playfellows; they often treated him so harshly that he cried, but he was careful always to go by himself when he did so, because he knew very well that he could expect no sympathy from his uncle or aunt. His father and mother had always thought he was a good boy. They never had had to tell him but once when they

wanted him to do or not to do anything. All the neighbors had said, too, that there was no better boy in town than Harry Bolton. But, although he was just the same boy in his uncle's house, always willing to do as he was bid, not quarrelsome or fault-finding, still he never had a word of praise here, and he hoped only for the day when he would be grown up and could go away and earn his own living.

Harry's room was in the attic of the house, a very large room indeed, for that matter, since it was the whole top floor of the house under the roof, his bed being laid on the floor in one corner. He had no companion at night, and was very much afraid of the rats which scurried about in the darkness like small race horses.

It happened one night that one of his cousins had quarrelled with him, struck him in the face, and then put the blame on Harry, who was promptly whipped and sent to his attic without any supper. Harry tried to sleep; but the rats were very lively that night and, although they meant no harm, frightened him. Then he fell to thinking how unhappy his life was, and longing for father and

mother love and care. The boy had not known such a thing as a loving word or kiss since he had come to his uncle's house to live.

When it had grown quite dark Harry rose from his bed and, walking to the little window of his attic, looked out at the twinkling lights of the village and wondered whether there was any other little boy so miserable.

"I wish there were such things as fairies;" he sobbed; and then was frightened at the sound of his own voice lest it might have been heard downstairs.

All of a sudden came an answer: "I am one."

Sure enough, on the sill of the little attic window stood the most beautiful little creature one could think of. She was not much taller than the length of your arm, and was dressed in cloth of gold all sprinkled over with diamonds. Her beautiful arms were bare from the shoulder; and on her fingers were rings set with jewels the names, even, of which poor Harry did not know. From each shoulder white wings unfolded, their edges glistening like hoar-frost on a bright fall morning. On her head was a little crown and in her hand a wand of ivory in

the top of which shone a diamond as large as a pea. But her face was most beautiful of all, so sweet and smiling and gentle.

"I am a fairy," she said, "and I have come to help you."

A Welcome Visitor in Harry's Attic.

"How did you happen to come to me?" asked Harry trembling with excitement.

"Because you have always been a good boy," she said, "have always told the truth, been obedient

to your parents and kind to every one. When such boys are in trouble fairies love to help them. Now tell me what I can do for you."

The boy was too much confused and too happy at her kind words to know quite what to say. "Oh, thank you—;" he began, and then he stopped.

She smiled very sweetly at him and said: "You don't seem to know what to ask, so I will think for you. Now do just as I say and your sorrows will all be ended."

"Oh, I will! I will!" he cried. So, while he was still leaning on the window and the beautiful fairy standing on the ledge outside, she laid out a programme for him.

"Get up early tomorrow morning and go down to the brook to fish. Throw your line first where the water is deepest, — a little distance below the bridge, you know. But whatever you catch there be sure to throw back again. Then wade across the brook to the other side, throw your line again and, once more, whatever you catch you must surely throw back into the brook. Then walk along to the shallowest place in the whole brook, just above the big rock, — you remember the place, — and throw in

your hook once more; but what you catch this third and last time you are carefully to keep."

A dozen questions rushed to the end of Harry's tongue. "What good can a fish do me?" he began. But all he heard was a laugh, like a chime of sweet bells, a rustle of wings like a dove's, and his strange caller was gone.

For a long time he stood breathless at the window, hoping that the fairy would come back; and when she did not return he felt even more lonesome than before her visit. Why had he not asked for some great thing when he had the chance? Then he went back to his bed in the corner and cried himself to sleep.

When the first light of day that came into Harry's attic wakened him he recalled what the fairy had said the night before. It did not take him long to put on his few clothes, get his fish-line and pole and hurry down-stairs. He did not wait for his breakfast but hurried out into the garden to dig his bait, and then ran down to the stream. Taking his place a little way below the bridge, where the water was deepest, he made ready to throw his line. There were other fishermen close at hand, but no one

happened to want to stand just where Harry had been told to take his place.

He threw his line very carefully although his hands were trembling as he wondered what would happen. No sooner had his hook touched the water than the pole, which was a strong one, bent almost double, and the boys standing near sent up a great shout as Harry pulled a fish nearly two feet long out of the brook.

The other boys, who had been having poor luck, gathered around him in great excitement all exclaiming at once that no such fish had ever been seen in that brook before. It was large enough to make a meal for a whole family, and Harry's first thought was of his aunt's surprise when she saw him bring home such a prize; perhaps at last she would have a kind word for him. Then he recalled what the fairy had told him, — to throw back the first fish he caught. The tears gushed to his eyes to think of what he would have to do; for he was a true fisherman, and it seemed wicked to throw away the wonderful catch which he had just made. Yet no sooner had he released the hook than he took the big fish in both hands, and, obeying

the orders of the fairy, threw it back into the stream.

You can imagine how the other boys felt when they saw what Harry had done. They called him every evil name they could think of, and one of them even rushed into the water in a foolish attempt to catch the fish with his hands before it could get away. They asked Harry what he had been thinking of to do so crazy a thing, what he meant by coming there and catching the best fish and then throwing it back into the water. Harry did not answer them a word but, taking his bait-box and pole and line, waded across the little brook to the other side, very thankful that the fairy had told him he might do that, and so get away from his angry fellow fishermen.

But he had no sooner rebaited his hook, and prepared to throw it again into the water, than he found all the other boys had dropped their own poles and waded across to his side. They were all anxious to see what this queer fisherman would do next. When the hook struck the water the pole again bent double with the weight of the fish which had taken it in its mouth, and the boys shouted: "He has caught the same one again."

But when Harry attempted to lift the fish out of the water its weight was so great as to break his pole in halves. He had to rush out into the stream and catch hold of the line itself in order to

THE BIG FISH HARRY THREW AWAY.

save his fish, which was so heavy that, stout little boy as he was, he could hardly lift it out of the water as he stood in the middle of the stream.

Then, just as the fairy had told him, although it

almost broke his heart to do it, he loosened the hook from the mouth of this second and even larger fish and threw it back into the stream. Now the boys on the bank of the brook went almost wild in their vexation and, when Harry came back, they set upon him, threw him down, struck and kicked him. Perhaps there would have been no more of this story to tell unless a man had happened to pass that way to drive the young ruffians away, so that poor Harry, with bleeding face and aching bones, could get to his feet again. When the man asked the angry boys why they had been beating the little fellow they all tried to explain at once, but he thought they must be telling a falsehood, since he well knew so large a fish had never been seen in the village brook. He threatened to duck them in the brook and then went on his way.

It was some time before poor Harry could untangle his line, rebait his hook, and get ready, with what was left of his pole, to make his final throw, according to the fairy's directions, in the shallowest part of the stream. The other boys now gathered close about him, expecting that this wonderful fisherman would next time surely land a whale,

and ready to take it away from him by main strength before he could do so foolish a thing as to throw it away.

And again no sooner had the hook touched the water than a fish took it; but the pole was not broken this time, or yet bent double. Indeed, the weight of the fish was so slight that the line hardly straightened out as Harry lifted his catch out of the stream. This last catch of Harry's was as small as the others had been big; and the rude boys, instead of trying to take it from him, threw themselves on the grass and roared in laughter. And when they saw Harry, instead of throwing it back, as they supposed of course he would do, since the fish was too small to eat, take it carefully from the hook and put it in his pocket, they laughed louder than before. After winding his line about what was left of the pole, and throwing away the unused bait, Harry walked sadly off, and the last sound he heard was the laughter of those same boys.

His bones were aching from the beating he had received, and, even after washing the blood from his face, he still felt very sore. He could not under-

stand how so little a fish could do him any good, after all his trouble; but surely the fairy would not have told him to throw away two such wonderful catches as he had made unless there was something he could not see about this same little creature which was going to help him. Making his way behind a bush, where no one could see and laugh at him, he took his knife from his pocket and prepared to dress the little fish, with the idea that next he would build a fire, cook and eat it. The silly boy did not know but perhaps, after he had swallowed the fish, he would at once become a man or some other wonderful change take place in him.

His knife struck something hard, and he found, as he laid the little fish open, a stone almost as large as a pea which, when he came to wipe it, shone like the brilliant he had seen in the end of the fairy's wand. Harry had often stood in front of the village jewellery store admiring the shining gems in the window; but he had never seen there a stone as large as this, which the more he rubbed it, shone and sparkled the brighter. It was a diamond; there was no doubt about that.

Leaving his hook and line and broken pole under

the bush where he could find them again, and putting the diamond carefully away in his most secret pocket, Harry went into the village and down to the jewellery store intending to try to sell his wonderful prize. He was happy enough now. It seemed that the good fairy had hidden the costly gem in the little fish meaning it to be his if he followed her directions. He could of course sell it for a great price, and the money would be all his own. He would now have a pleasant home, and neat clothes, and go to school like other boys.

The jeweller stood near the door talking with a customer, and Harry, hearing the word "diamond," suddenly became much interested. The talk was about Mr. Smith, who lived on top of the hill, and who had lost, only the day before, a very costly diamond. The stone had fallen, it was said, out of its setting in his scarf-pin while the owner stood on the bridge which crossed the very brook where Harry had caught his fish. Mr. Smith had afterward sent men down to the brook to scrape its bed, under the bridge, in search for the diamond, but so far all in vain. He felt very much troubled, not only because the lost diamond was a valuable one but even more

because it had belonged to his father and to his grandfather before him; and he would rather have lost ten other diamonds as large than this one.

Just then the jeweller happened to see Harry and harshly ordered him out of the store. Harry was quite ready to obey; and he did not stop on the street outside, but started as fast as his little legs would carry him up the road toward the bridge which led across the brook.

When he reached the bridge, sure enough, he saw men still scraping all about in search for the lost diamond, taking up the sand in pails and then washing it out, looking carefully at every little pebble in the hope that some one of them might prove to be the missing gem. But Harry now knew that they would not find the diamond there. He felt certain that Mr. Smith's diamond was in his pocket, the little fish which he had caught at his third throw having swallowed it.

He ran quickly across the bridge and up the hill toward Mr. Smith's house. Honest boy that he was, Harry had but one thought now, and that was to return the diamond to its owner. His dream of comfort and good cheer faded away and

left only a dull pain about his heart as a reminder of his lost hope.

Now every boy in town knew where Mr. Smith's house was. Mr. Smith was the wealthiest man in all the country round; he had one home in this village, another in the city near by, and still another at the seashore, while he passed a good deal of his time in foreign countries. The place was surrounded by a high iron fence, the only entrance being between two great gates which hung wide open when Harry came up. Many a time he had looked through that high fence and longed to go inside; this time, however, he did not wait for permission but, thinking only of his errand, rushed boldly through the open gates and up the winding driveway in the direction of the house, which looked to him like a palace.

He had gone but a few steps before he heard a gruff voice saying: "What are you doing here, boy?" and looking around he saw a man in working-clothes, with a rake in his hand, who he supposed was the gardener.

"I want to see Mr. Smith;" he answered, almost out of breath from running.

"What does such a little rascal as you want of

Mr. Smith?" asked the gardener coming up to him.

"Oh, I must see him;" said Harry.

"There is no 'must' about it;" growled the gardener laying his hand on the little fellow's shoulder. "We don't allow boys like you in these grounds; you're a little beggar, that's what you are."

"Oh, no;" cried Harry, "I never begged in my life."

But the gardener still keeping hold of Harry's shoulder laughed at him. "What else could you want of Mr. Smith? Why, the butler would whip you out of the house. Come, get along with you!" and the gardener pushed the boy back with his strong hands.

But just then it happened that a house maid, who had been sent on an errand down to the village, came in through the gates and, seeing the gardener roughly pushing the boy away, cried out to him: "What is the matter?"

At this the gardener took his hand from Harry's shoulder and began to talk to the maid, who happened to be one of his particular friends. Harry did not wait for any better chance, but the moment

the heavy hand was removed from his shoulder he started to run up the driveway as fast as he could. As for the gardener, he was satisfied with calling after the boy two or three times, and then gave the rest of his attention to the pretty maid.

It was quite a steep hill and soon all Harry's breath was gone. Looking back he saw that the gardener was no longer interested in him, so he stopped to get breath. It was the most beautiful place he had ever seen. On either side of the driveway were tall trees; their boughs sheltered him from above almost like the roof of a piazza. But beyond the trees he could see flower-beds, summer-houses all covered with blossoms, little ponds with white swans floating on the shining waters, and boats against the banks, and a playground where a sweet little girl of about his own age, a sunbonnet hanging back on her shoulders, was romping with two or three of her mates. He would dearly have loved to stay there for a long time; but he suddenly remembered his errand and hurried on toward the house.

The driveway led up to the front steps, but they were quite too grand for him. The house was so large that he thought half the village might have lived

A Beautiful Place to Play.

in it, and as he glanced through the windows into the rooms it was like a glimpse of fairyland to him. Making his way around the house he at last came to a door which he thought more proper for a bare-footed boy to enter, and going up to it he knocked. A maid came to the door and looked astonished to see who it was that had knocked.

"What do you want here?" she said.

"I want to see Mr. Smith;" answered Harry.

"Mr. Smith!" she laughed; "why, he doesn't want to see such little scamps as you."

"I have something to tell him;" pleaded Harry earnestly.

The maid was just shutting the door in Harry's face, when some one quite out of sight spoke to her from within.

"Let me see the boy;" said the voice. So the maid opened the door and Harry stepped inside; then, looking to see who it was that had been talking to the maid, he did not at all like the face of this man. It was the butler whom Mr. Smith hired to manage the other servants for him.

Now the butler was a shrewd man; he was satisfied that this little boy who was so very

anxious to see Mr. Smith really had something important to say to him. But he was also a very selfish man, always trying to gain something for himself out of whatever happened. He did not want the maid to hear what Harry had to say; so he called pleasantly: "Come this way, little boy."

The maid looked surprised to hear the butler speak so politely to a barefooted boy. But she had her own work to do and went to attend to it, while the man led Harry through a long hall into a room which the little fellow thought must be the best parlor of the whole house, although really it was only the servants' sitting-room.

"Now what is it, my little man?" began the butler very smoothly.

"I want to see Mr. Smith;" repeated Harry.

"Sit down, my little fellow;" said the man. But Harry had never seen such chairs and he was afraid that he might soil one of them if he sat in it.

"Oh, no;" he replied; "I would much rather stand."

"Why do you want to see him, my little man?" asked the butler.

"I can't tell you;" said Harry. For the more

smoothly the man spoke the more afraid Harry was of him.

"Tell me your errand, little boy;" said the butler, "and I will see Mr. Smith for you."

"I can't do that;" insisted Harry.

By this time the butler suspected that Harry's secret was something about the lost diamond, and he wanted very much to learn what the secret was in order to use it for his own benefit. So he exclaimed suddenly: "You have found the diamond, have you?"

"Oh, how did you know?" cried Harry forgetting for the moment and letting his secret out.

"Give it to me," smiled the man, "and I will take it to him."

"No, no;" insisted Harry; feeling sure the butler was a bad man who could not be trusted with the jewel; "I must take it to him myself."

At this the butler looked very stern; "Well; wait here; I will go to Mr. Smith and ask him if he will see you."

He left the room, but had been gone only a few seconds before he came back and said: "Mr. Smith is eating his breakfast and directs you to

give me the diamond so that I can take it to him."

"No;" answered Harry who knew that the fellow had not had time to see Mr. Smith and return so soon; "I must give it into his own hand."

Then the butler drew out a pocket book and took from it several bills. "I will give you all this money for your trouble;" he said, holding out the bills to Harry. It was more money than the little fellow had ever seen before.

But Harry was quite too honest to sell Mr. Smith's diamond. He only shook his head.

"I don't believe you have any diamond;" growled the butler very roughly. "I think you are only a little beggar. Show it to me quickly or I will shut you in the cellar."

So Harry, being much frightened, and not knowing what else to do, took the stone from his pocket and held it out in his hand. He instantly saw from the look in the man's eyes that it was really the lost diamond, and almost at once the butler sprang forward and tried to snatch the jewel; but Harry gave a loud cry and ran for the door, his enemy very close in pursuit.

The poor boy had never been so frightened in his life. He thought of the dark cellar where the evil man had threatened to shut him up, and wished he had not listened, the night before, to what the fairy had said to him, since it seemed to have brought so much trouble to him who had full enough before. Out into the hall he ran as fast as he could put one foot before the other, always hearing the heavy steps of the man behind him but drawing nearer and nearer, until, just as he was overtaken, he ran into the arms of a child, a girl, whom he almost knocked down.

"Oh! oh!" she cried. "What is the matter?"

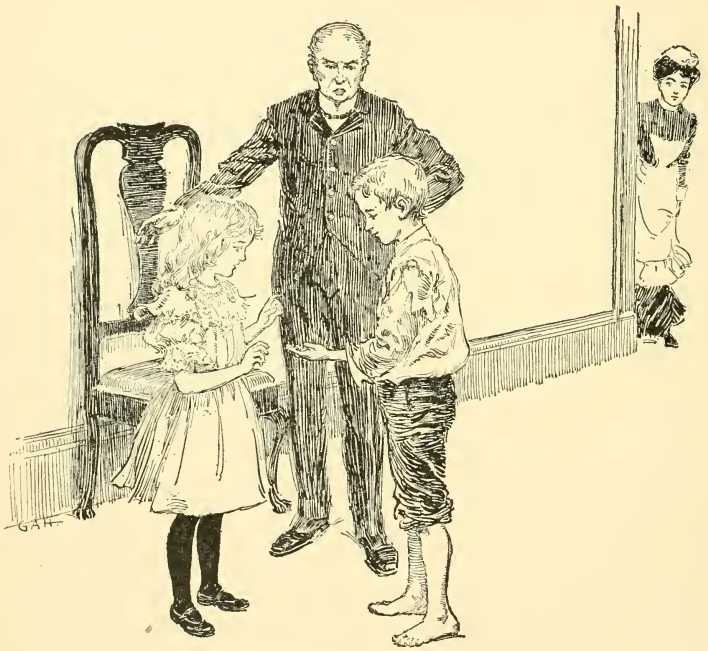
Harry was too much surprised to speak, but the butler was not slow explaining that this was a beggar boy who had been caught in the house.

"I am not a beggar;" Harry cried breathlessly, and, looking up, he saw that the little girl was the same he had seen playing in the grounds a few minutes before. "I only asked to see your father;" he added quickly. "I have found his diamond, but this man tried to buy it and then to steal it from me."

At this the butler laid his hand heavily on Harry's shoulder and tried to pull him away.

"Don't you believe him, Miss Grace;" he said. "He is a bad boy."

But little Grace, looking in Harry's face, could



HARRY SHOWS THE DIAMOND.

not believe that the boy was bad; and she said to the butler: "Take your hands off the boy; I want to talk to him;" then, more kindly, to Harry: "If you have my father's diamond let me see it, little boy."

So Harry opened his hand and showed the stone lying in its palm. Her eyes shone as brightly as the diamond itself, and her face was all smiles as she cried: "Yes, yes, that is my father's diamond; how pleased he will be! Come with me, little boy; I will take you to my father."

The butler stood back looking very angry while the two children passed up the hallway, hand in hand. The little girl took Harry from this hall into a far wider and grander one, the ceilings of which were very high above his head and covered with beautiful pictures, and into a room where a gentleman sat alone finishing his breakfast.

The table was bright with silver and beautifully painted china, and Harry was more frightened to look about him than he had been even at the threats of the butler. But how surprised the gentleman at the table looked when he saw his beautiful little daughter leading a barefooted boy with a scratched and bruised face!

"What is this, Grace?" he said.

"He has found your diamond, papa."

"This little chap?" exclaimed the gentleman, rising and quickly coming toward them.

"Show it to him, little boy;" she said.

So Harry again opened his tightly clinched little fist showing the gem in its palm.

"Yes;" said Mr. Smith with a pleased smile, "it is my diamond. And how did you find it?"

"Oh, it is so long a story!" said Harry; "and I had so hard a time getting it to you! I am tired."

"And hungry too?" said the gentleman.

"Oh, yes," cried the little girl; "you must be hungry."

So she pushed a chair up to the table and led Harry to it and served him with the choicest dainties on the table.

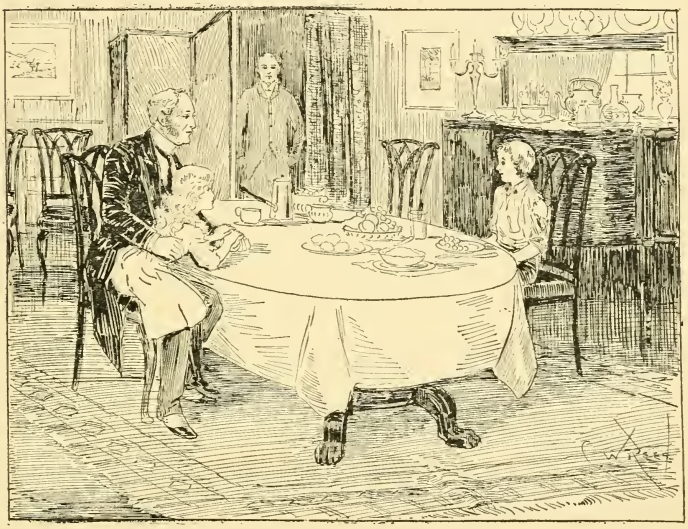
But the boy was too excited to eat. "I can't swallow;" he said.

Mr. Smith was all smiles and kindness. "Perhaps you would rather tell your story first."

So, taking his little daughter on his knee, and looking pleasantly across the table to Harry, he asked: "How did you find my diamond? Begin at the beginning and tell me all about it. But first tell me who you are, and who is your father."

So Harry began by telling him that he had no father or mother but lived with his uncle and his aunt who

did not love him. He told about the little attic room where he slept, and of the rats that frightened him at night. He told about being whipped the night before for something he had not done, and then



HARRY TELLS HIS STRANGE STORY.

about the fairy who stood on the window-sill and said he had been a good boy and that she would show him how to have a pleasanter life.

Now perhaps Mr. Smith thought that Harry had been dreaming about the fairy; but his daughter,

Grace, was not too old to believe in fairies, and she could not take her eyes off the little fellow as he described how beautiful the fairy looked as she stood on the window-sill, with her crown of gold and jewels, her wings of down and gossamer, her robe of gold, and her ivory wand with the diamond set in its top.

Then Harry told what the fairy had said he should do, and how carefully he had obeyed her; how he had thrown back the two wonderful big fishes into the brook and been beaten for it; how he had found the diamond in the third fish, a small one which looked not worth saving. The boy then explained how he had learned that the diamond belonged to Mr. Smith and had made haste to bring it to its owner; how hard it was to get past the gardener; how pleasant it was in the shaded driveway where he stood resting and watching little Grace; how the house maid would have turned him away but the butler had invited him in and had done his best to buy or steal the jewel, until, just as matters were at their worst, little Grace had come to his rescue.

But the end of all Harry's troubles had come. Mr.

Smith said that so brave, true and honest a boy he would like to have always with him.

"You shall live with me," he said, "and all that I can do for you I will."

So Harry went barefoot no more; he played in the beautiful grounds which he had admired so much, with the dear little girl who had been so kind to him, and all that was sad and miserable in his life was changed.

STORY OF THE ENCHANTED CAVE

HAROLD BARTON was the eldest of several children, and his father and mother were very poor. He was but thirteen years old, when, one morning, his father being absent at his work, his mother called him into her room and began to cry over him and kiss him at the same time that she tried to talk.

"What are you telling me, mother?" said Harold, "and why are you crying?"

Then his mother tried to dry her eyes and, sitting down on a chair, drew her big boy to her lap and said: "Dear Harold, you know that your father and I are very poor and have hard work to buy food and clothes for our family. You are a big boy, my son, and we must send you away from us. Do you suppose that you can go out into the world without your mother's care?"

Harold was a brave boy as well as a big one; and, although he felt sad at the thought of leaving his

parents and his brothers and sisters, he choked down the sob in his throat and replied: "Why, I ought to be big enough, mother. If I can do nothing else you know how well I can shoot with father's gun. If you will let me take that I am sure that I need not go hungry."

"Your father feels as unhappy as I do to have you go, Harold, dear;" she said; "but perhaps so brave and big a boy as you can not only take care of yourself but, by and by, help us and your little brothers and sisters, too. We will try to think of that. Yes, yes, my son, take your father's gun which I know you can handle so well. Now good-bye, my dear. Make haste, before your father comes back, and before your little brothers and sisters begin to wonder what we are so long talking about. I have your few clothes all ready in a bundle; you know where your father's gun hangs. Go quickly, my son, before my heart breaks."

So it was that Harold went out into the great world to seek his fortune, with all his possessions in a bundle tied to the gun-barrel on his shoulder. He did not look around until the turn in the road where he could catch the last glimpse of his home; then

he saw his mother still standing in the door waving her hand to him.

For several days Harold tramped along the roads, sleeping at night under such cover as he could find in sheds, and sometimes under trees, for the weather was warm. He had plenty to eat, for when he was hungry all he had to do was to shoot a bird or a rabbit and, building a fire out of broken branches, cook as dainty a meal as a boy could ask for. As he passed from town to town he kept asking those he met if they had work for a strong boy but he found none.

One night, after a long tramp through the woods looking for some shed or old hut where he could sleep, he came to a hollow or small cave in the side of a hill which he thought might have been once the den of some wild animal. It was just beginning to rain and he was glad of any sort of shelter. Being very tired, he threw himself down on a pile of leaves which might have been a wild animal's nest, and was soon sound asleep.

When the morning came so much more light poured into the entrance of the cave that he could see about him, and, being of an inquiring mind,

he was not satisfied until he had carefully examined it on all sides. He had about made up his mind that, as long as nobody seemed to have any work for him to do, he would make his home here

HAROLD IN THE PASSAGE.

for the present; and he was eager to find out all about his new house. In one corner of the cave the earth seemed much softer than anywhere else, and as he pushed his feet down into it they seemed to sink into an open space below. It seemed to Harold

as if there must be a hollow place below with which, once, this, perhaps, had connected; and he lost no time in falling upon his knees and digging the earth out with his hands.

Soon he had an opening large enough to admit his body, and crawled down. As he crept along he found the space about and above him enlarge until very soon he could stand upright and, after groping his way for what seemed to him a long time, it began to get lighter in the queer passage that he had discovered, and then he could make his way much faster. He felt sure such a tunnel as this must lead to some place worth visiting.

The light grew clearer and clearer, showing that the end was at hand. In a few steps more he leaped out into an open space which might be called a room; certainly it was very different from any cave that he had ever heard of. The rock overhead had been polished almost as smooth as the ceiling of a room, and the different minerals which nature had put there glistened very brightly. The side walls were straight and smooth, except for several deep cracks, and were polished for quite a way up from the floor. The floor itself was covered with thick rugs of soft

colors. He looked about to find what made the light, since no sunlight could enter such a cavern as this. He then saw that all the light came from a large number of queer little cups, on the top of each of which a lighted wick floated. He had seen pictures of just such lamps which had been in use in the world thousands of years ago.

There was no one in the room when he entered, but there were various signs that it had not long been vacant, and, from the number of pillows and queer-looking musical instruments which he saw strewn about, he thought the tenant must have been a woman. There was no such thing as a table or a chair in the room, and he made up his mind that anybody living there must be in the habit of sitting on the floor. Then he heard a soft rustling noise at an opening in the other side of the room and a young girl appeared. He had no time to notice more than that she was dressed as he had never before seen a girl dressed, and that she looked to be not far from his own age, for the moment that she saw him she gave a loud cry of astonishment.

She spoke first, but in a language quite strange to him. The words seemed to run very close

together, although, for that matter, he had noticed the same habit in the talk in his own language of many girls he had known. He listened as best he could, trying if he might not catch one word which he

Meeting of Harold and Alice.

had ever heard before, and at last recognized the familiar "oh!" which showed that the girl was much excited as well as frightened.

It was quite a while before she ceased her flow of words, and then she seemed to want to hear from him. Harold, taking warning from her rapidity

of speech, tried to speak quite slowly, saying: "This is a very queer home which you have here. I hope I am not too unwelcome. Do you want me to go away?"

He could see that the girl did not understand his words at all better than he had understood hers; but when he made a motion toward the opening through which he had come, then she seemed to see that he was offering to leave her, and the idea struck her favorably. She crossed quickly to where he stood and, taking him by the arm, gently pushed him toward the door through which he had come, — if an opening in a rocky wall may be called a door.

Now Harold did not think it good manners to stay where he was not wanted. Although he did not at all like to leave so interesting a place without knowing more about it, yet, since the girl wished it, he made up his mind to go.

But before he had gone more than three or four steps her hand tightened on his arm, and she stopped him. It seems that young ladies, even underground, sometimes change their minds. She drew him back again still talking as fast as human

tongue can go. As long as Harold could not understand a word she was saying, he made the best of his chance to look a little closer at his new friend, using his eyes since his ears were useless. Instead of shoes she wore pieces of leather just covering the soles of her feet and held in place by cords. Her ankles were bare. She wore a long flowing garment, caught loosely a little above her waist; there were no sleeves to it, but her arms were adorned with beautiful gold bracelets. Her hair fell in ringlets, and was held away from her forehead by a pretty band. She had soft brown eyes; and although her cheeks were anything but rosy they were as clear as marble.

By the time he had finished looking her over the young lady had stopped talking and was waiting for him to say something else which she, in turn, would not be able to understand.

Harold saw it did not make much difference what he said; but, since he seemed to be expected to say something, he remarked: "What a beautiful dress you have, and what a nice little girl you are! I only wish we talked the same language so that we could understand each other." Then he smiled; and,

a smile being the same in all languages, his new friend was not slow to understand that.

Reaching out her hand she took his and seemed to be inviting him to sit down. Being eager to please her, he was about to drop down on the floor, when she set him an example by taking possession of one of the cushions. Drawing another cushion near her she touched it with her hand and smiled at him; and a very sweet smile the girl had.

If they were to get along at all together Harold saw that the first necessity was to know what to call each other. So, seeing how useful signs had been so far, he pointed with a laugh to himself and said: "Harold."

She nodded as if she liked the name and tried to say the word after him, and after two or three trials succeeded pretty well. Then she pointed to herself and spoke a word which Harold concluded was her name. But it was not so easy for him to pronounce that, and the nearest he could finally get to it was "Alice." She seemed much amused at his failure to pronounce her name correctly, and tried to say it after him as he pronounced it. It seemed settled at last

that they should call each other "Harold" and "Alice."

Then an idea seemed to strike Alice; and, after another of her little speeches, which meant something in her own language, but nothing to Harold, she ran out of the room, only to return shortly with a large platter covered with nice things to eat,— some slices of cold meat, — lamb, Harold thought, some queer-looking vegetable such as he had never seen before, something which looked like bread, and a cup of milk; — there was no doubt about the milk.

Harold, having had nothing to eat since noon of the day before, was very hungry; and, as Alice seemed to enjoy watching him, he kept on eating until the platter was clean. Then for the first time he noticed that the dishes were of pure gold; and he began to think that perhaps the fortune which had looked so far away yesterday might have been close at hand after all. He had apparently made the acquaintance of an heiress.

He had hardly finished his meal, however, when he heard a noise like a heavy tread. Alice heard it too and, looking much frightened, caught

him quickly by the arm and led him once more toward the opening through which he had come. But this time Harold was not nearly so willing to go, and hung back heedless of her beseeching looks and excited words. At last, giving up the idea of getting him out by the way he had come, she hastily drew him back across the room and up the passage through which she herself had first entered. When they had reached a very dark opening in the rocky wall of the cavern, she pushed him toward it, saying words which no doubt meant: "Stay there, or you will be sorry."

Then she ran quickly back into the larger room, leaving him to himself. For a minute after she had gone, everything in his place of refuge looked black to Harold; then he noticed in one side of the room, or den,—whichever one might call it, a little glimmer of light, and found the light came through a deep crack in the solid rock through which he could see into the large room to which Alice had now returned.

The sound of approaching footsteps grew plainer. He felt for his gun, and made certain that it was ready for use if necessary. Then he looked again.

He could see Alice standing in the middle of the room with both hands pressed tightly on her bosom, just as he had seen his mother when something was going very wrong, with her face turned in the direction from which the sound, growing louder every moment, seemed to come. He was more sorry for Alice than anxious for himself. Suddenly the little girl appeared to think of a better plan; and she had just time to throw herself on one of the cushions when a great form stood in one corner of the room.

Harold had read about giants; but he had not supposed they were such terrible objects as this enormous man, almost twice as large as his father, with great legs like the pillars of a house, and arms like the branches of an oak-tree. His cheeks and chin were covered with a long beard; he wore a queer peaked hat, and his clothes seemed to be made of leather; his legs were bare below the knee, and on his feet he wore the same strange kind of shoes Harold had seen on Alice's little feet. Harold waited nervously to hear the giant's voice, but to his relief it was not at all gruff, although it seemed to fill the whole room like the bass notes of an organ. He

spoke in the same strange language which Alice had used, and, from his manner, Harold supposed that he said: "How do you do?" or some such thing.

It was long afterward before Harold learned the language which seemed so strange to him now, but there is no reason for us to wait as long as did Harold, so I will give the talk of the giant and Alice as it took place.

"Ah, my little one!" said the giant: "Have you been lonesome while I was away?"

"Why, no;" she said, her voice still trembling with excitement. "I did not think you had been gone very long."

"Not gone very long!" he repeated. "Why, it was early morning when I went away, and it is afternoon now. But you seem excited, my child; what has happened to you?"

"Oh, nothing;" she said hurriedly. "Oh, nothing at all."

The giant looked about the room and then back at her.

"The room is turned topsy-turvy," he said, "as if you had been playing some game."

"Oh, yes;" she cried, trying to laugh; "I have been trying to amuse myself."

"And been eating, too;" said the giant, looking at the plates and dishes. "You did not wait for me."

"Oh, no, I was so hungry."

"Well, well," he said, throwing himself down on a long row of cushions, "I am hungry, too. Bring me what there is to eat."

Then Alice hurried along the passageway passing the little den where Harold was watching. He crept to the opening, hoping she would speak to him as she passed, but she only put her finger to her lip, and, as the light fell on her face, he saw that she looked more frightened than ever. Soon she returned bearing in her hands another gold platter heaped high with some such food as Harold had so much enjoyed, but enough, it seemed to him, for a whole family at least.

Much as there was, the giant did not seem to have enough, and, after drinking six great cups of milk, he called for more.

"There is no more;" said Alice.

When Harold saw the giant hold out his empty cup he knew that he was asking for more milk, and

the boy remembered how, having been very thirsty himself, he had made Alice fill his cup, — a much smaller one, of course, — half a dozen times before he was satisfied.

"No more milk!" exclaimed the giant more gruffly. "But I am sure there was more than this in the cave."

"I was so thirsty;" whimpered Alice, tears of fright running down her face.

"And a little thing like you drank all that milk!" he said: "You must have spilled it."

Now Alice, not having had the best of bringing up, thought it no harm to tell a lie. "Yes," she said, "I did spill it; and I was afraid you would be angry."

"Well, never mind;" he said; "I will take a nap now."

And rolling over on his pillows in a few moments he was sound asleep. Harold's father had a bad habit of snoring which caused his wife a great deal of distress, and no little complaint from the rest of the family, but such snoring as this the boy had not supposed possible; it almost seemed to shake the hill over the cavern. But for all that Harold found no fault. It was a great relief to him to have

good proof that the giant was not in the way of doing any mischief for a little while at least.

Like most boys of his age Harold was somewhat reckless; and no sooner was the giant asleep than he made his way out of his little den, back through the corridor, and suddenly stood before the very eyes of Alice, who, for a moment, looked too startled to speak.

But little girls, like big ones, admire courage, and, after a few whispered words, which he supposed to be in the nature of a scolding, she stole another glance at the giant, to be certain that he was sound asleep and, taking Harold's hand, led him along the corridor to another room quite a distance off. When they had reached this room she began a long speech to him, not a word of which he could understand, which he answered with one not quite as long which she could not understand any better.

Alice was a quick-witted girl, and she saw at once that they must learn each other's language, and the sooner the work was begun the better. So, laying her hand on a cushion, she said some word which, in her language, meant "cushion," and Harold tried to say it after her. Then he put his hand

on the cushion and gave its name in his language. Thus, after knowing each other for several hours, these two young people had at last learned three words of each other's language which they both could understand. Then Alice went on, putting her hand on various objects in the room and giving their names in her language; and after Harold had repeated them he gave the names of the same things in his language and she said them over after him.

Time went very fast, for the lesson was much more pleasant than any that Harold had ever taken at school, when suddenly the sound of the heavy tread of the giant was again heard, this time at the head of the corridor. But Alice had already shown the boy a convenient place to hide, behind a pile of skins which lay in one corner. So, by the time the giant entered the room, Alice appeared to be very busy putting things in order. He did not stay long. It seemed he only came to tell her that he was going out to work again.

No sooner had the giant gone than the lessons were resumed, and Alice's work was put off until some other time. When it grew late she told the boy to take a pile of the lambskins, all covered with wool

on one side, and make a soft bed for himself in the little den where she had first hidden him. She then handed him another platter filled with things to eat, but was careful this time to give him water to drink instead of milk. When the giant came back again from his work Harold was sound asleep, although fortunately the boy did not snore, and Alice was busy getting ready the giant's supper as she had done so many thousand times before.

The next day everything was arranged very nicely. Harold's breakfast was waiting for him as soon as the giant went out; and, after a morning spent with Alice in studying, the boy had time to eat a comfortable dinner before the giant, whose name he found to be "Dor," came for his midday meal. While Dor was taking his after-dinner nap the lessons were resumed again, being only interrupted when he came to announce that he was going back to his work.

So it went on from day to day, from week to week and from month to month. Harold had never had so pleasant a time in his life before, and both he and Alice seemed quite to have forgotten all fear of the terrible things which might happen if the

giant should find the intruder. They had both learned enough of each other's language so that they could begin to talk together. But it was only long afterward that Harold knew all about the strange history of Dor and Alice.

It seemed that, many thousands of years before, Alice was even then a little girl, the daughter of a great king. Dor thought a great deal of the child, and finally asked the king to promise her to him for his wife when she should grow up. The king thereupon became very angry and told the giant that if he ever came into the palace again he should be killed. But Dor was a very determined giant and, since the king so scornfully refused him for a son-in-law, he made a plan to steal the little girl away and hide her until she should grow old enough to be married. So, one day when Alice was playing in the grounds about the palace, with no one watching, he rushed in quickly and catching her in his arms hurried away with her.

Now Alice had known the giant ever since she was a baby and, as he had always been kind to her, she liked him very much; so, when he took her up this afternoon and ran away with her, she at first

thought it was in play, as he had often carried her on his back, and instead of crying out she only laughed and enjoyed it.

But, as the giant kept on running, covering the miles very fast with his long legs, she began to get frightened and begged to be taken home. Then Dor promised to take her to a favorite aunt who lived in another country. The giant well knew that Alice's father would follow him with all his army, and he hardly stopped to breathe until he came to the shore of a great sea; there a ship lay waiting for him, with sailors whom he had hired with a great deal of money. The ship sailed many weeks before it came to land, and Alice, you may be sure, was glad to see the green earth once more; but she knew now that she would never look upon her home again, the giant having told her that as soon as she had grown up she was to be his wife.

Whatever happened to the ship and the sailors Alice never knew, but the next morning after she had landed there was no ship in sight. Then the giant took her through this strange new country, killing animals for their food as he went, or taking

what he chose from the wild people whom they met. She often asked him where they were going.

"On! on!" was all he replied, until one day they came to a sort of hollow in the side of a hill and, going in to escape the storm which was driving outside, they found the cave to be only the entrance to a long passageway into the hill, while at the end of the passage were pleasant rooms cut out of the solid rock and full of beautiful things. She thought it must once have been the home of a great magician who had laid a spell upon it, because although they had been there thousands of years since, neither she nor the giant seemed to grow older than they were the first day they came in, and even the clothes they wore did not wear out. But the giant, who was rather stupid, did not seem to notice the years as they went by or to wonder that this little girl, whom he had taken away from her home so long, long ago, did not grow, or the time when she could become his wife come any nearer.

One day, after Harold and Alice had pretty well learned each other's language, the boy said he was going to discover where it was the giant went every morning after breakfast. So, taking his gun in his

hand, he started to follow Dor keeping near enough so that he would not miss him in the winding passage, but far enough away so that if the giant looked back he could not see that he was being followed.

It was not a short walk, and Harold had been so long without any exercise that he had become very tired before a light, different from that of the Enchanted Cave, began to shine ahead. Then the heavy steps ceased to echo in the passageway and Harold knew that the giant must have passed out into an open space. Following cautiously, the boy saw, to his great surprise, a little valley between high mountains, and in the valley a garden with fruits and vegetables growing, while near by a flock of sheep and half a dozen cattle were eating grass. Standing a little back in the shadow of the passageway, so that he could not be seen, Harold watched Dor going about his morning's work, weeding the garden with a strange-looking hoe, and milking the cows. Then he saw him call one of the little lambs, kill and skin it and cut the meat up into pieces convenient to carry.

When at last the giant seemed to be getting ready to return with his load the boy waited no longer, but

made his own way back to the inner chamber as fast as possible.

Harold found Alice waiting by the door, peering eagerly up the passage and listening for the sound of footsteps. She seemed very glad to see him, but was too wise and kind a little girl to put him in any danger by asking questions then, and only hurried him quickly into his own little den as the steps of the giant were heard approaching very rapidly down the passage.

But when the giant took his afternoon nap Alice lost no time in leading Harold out into the kitchen, and asking him questions much faster than he could answer them. Poor little girl! Shut up in this cave for so many thousands of years, with nothing to think of and nothing to inquire about! You may guess how interested she was in the wonderful things which Harold told her about the giant's garden in the sunshine with its growing things, about the cows cropping the sweet grass and wading in the sparkling brook, and about the mother sheep and their little lambs. The boy did not tell her how Dor had killed one of the lambs; he disliked to make her unhappy.

No sooner had Dor risen from his nap the next afternoon, and started in a new direction for what he called his "work" than Harold again followed him. After the giant had walked a little way in the dark he paused and, taking one of the strange-looking lamps from a niche in the rocky wall, lighted it. Harold stopped when Dor stopped to light his lamp, and when Dor started again the boy again started to follow in his track, but more carefully now. He did not dare to get too near the giant, but, on the other hand, he was afraid lest, if he fell much behind, he might lose his way entirely. At several of the sharp turns in the winding corridor the giant would certainly have seen the boy if he had thought to look behind. Harold concluded that Dor had been so long without visitors in his wonderful cavern that he had almost forgotten there could be any one else in the whole world but just himself and little Alice.

At last Dor came to a small room cut out of the solid rock and with the same queer cracks in the side walls which the boy had noticed in the other rooms. He then lighted a score of lamps until the room was as light as day, and Harold saw what made his eyes almost jump out of his head. In

the middle of the room were two piles of glistening diamonds, rubies, pearls and sapphires, sparkling like stars. One pile was very large, the other much smaller; but even in the smaller pile were

THE GIANT COUNTING HIS TREASURE.

gems enough to make thousands of women happy. On a side wall were chalk marks which the boy afterward found were put there by Dor as he worked.

Then the giant began upon his regular daily task, which Harold thought must be a very pleasant one,

being nothing more or less than taking jewels from the big pile and putting them on the smaller one, counting them as he did so. The chalk marks on the wall were made by the giant as he counted. Harold did not dare to wait an instant after the giant arose from his work, although almost wild with excitement and curiosity, but, turning about, swiftly made his way back and, passing Alice with only a quick "hush," rushed into his own little den and lay very still.

Almost at once the giant came in with a strange look on his face. "I am sure I heard a noise. Have you been out this way, Alice?"

"Oh, no;" she said. "I have only been in the kitchen. I never dare to come after you."

"But I am sure I heard a footstep;" he whispered hoarsely.

"It must have been the echo;" suggested Alice.

"It wasn't as loud as an echo of my heavy tread, but was more like the quick footfalls of a girl or a boy;" answered Dor.

Alice did not know what more to say, and looked very much frightened. The giant naturally supposed that she would be as much afraid of an intruder as

he, and had not the slightest suspicion that she knew anything about those mysterious footfalls. He was a kind-hearted giant too and, when he saw her terror, he forgot all about his own fears, and did his best to comfort her, in his own clumsy fashion, remarking that very likely he was mistaken: Surely no one could have come along the passage unless she had seen him.

"If you should hear or see anything unusual," he said, "it may mean that some one from the outside world has come down into our cave. You must let me know at once."

Then she set his supper before him and, after eating, as usual, everything in sight, he began to tell her about the people in the outside world.

"They are very bad," he said, "and if they ever came in here they would take from us all we have to eat and wear, all our gold and jewels, and drive us out into the cruel outside world."

"It is a miserable place outside;" he added. "I remember it very well, although you were only a little girl when we left it and have probably forgotten. It is either too hot there or too cold all the time; very few people have enough to eat or to

wear; and everybody is always trying to hurt somebody else. This is the only place to live in happiness, my dear. Now, if you would only grow up so that we could be married! I don't see why it takes you so long. As I think of it, you look just as young now as you did when I brought you here thousands of years ago. Surely you should be a grown woman by this time. I don't understand it at all."

But although Dor could lift very heavy weights, twist a piece of iron as if it were lead pipe, or take a man under each arm and run a mile with him, any child of ten years old that had been to school was better at thinking than he. So he quickly grew tired of using his brains, and saying it must be bedtime threw himself on his cushions and went to sleep.

But Alice could hardly sleep at all that night for wonder at what Dor had told her of the outside world about which she remembered very little. No sooner had he gone to his gardening, next morning, and Harold come out of his little den and finished his breakfast, than she made the boy tell her everything he could about the people that lived in his world. She must know whether really it was all as bad outside as Dor had said.

Harold did not know exactly where to begin, or, once begun, where to stop, but he told her about himself and his own home, how poor his father and mother were and how hard it was for them to get enough to eat and to wear.

"Then Dor is right;" she said. "It is far better down here."

But then he told about the wonderful sun which rose and set in the sky each day. He tried to describe the beautiful trees and flowers and lovely green meadows, the silvery rivers, the blue waves of the ocean, the fleecy clouds, the bright stars and the moon which shone at night. Then he told of the birds which sang in the trees, the animals that roamed over the fields, and of the wonderful things men made for their use and the things still more wonderful which they made merely to look at.

He explained to her, too, that in the outside world little girls grew to be women, and boys to be men, and that, for all the trouble and care and pain, yet the true and the brave did not come to real harm.

"Oh, I am sure I should like it;" she cried. "Can't you plan some way to take me out with you?"

Harold hesitated for a moment before he answered speaking slowly and carefully: "I have been thinking very hard since yesterday, and I surely mean to take you away from this Enchanted Cave and lead you home to my parents."

"Oh, how happy I shall be!" she said and clapped her hands.

"Yes;" continued the boy, "but we must not go empty handed. My parents were too poor to take care of me alone; they can hardly provide for two of us."

"What shall we do, then?" she asked, clasping her hands over her bosom again, after her fashion when anxious or frightened.

"Why, my dear Alice," he answered, "I now know where there are heaps of jewels, and if I can take one little bag only of them we shall have enough and to spare for ourselves and my parents and brothers and sisters.

"But have you thought how can we escape?" she asked eagerly.

"There are only two ways that I can think of;" he replied. "One way is to drive the giant out ahead of us; you see if we went ahead he would

soon discover it and follow us. The other way is to kill him; then of course there would be nobody to interfere with our plans."

"Kill him!" she exclaimed. "What is that?"

Harold did not know how to explain to her. Living in an Enchanted Cave, where one never even grew old, the child of course had no idea what death meant. He kept silent for some minutes while he tried to think what to say.

"I could kill him," he finally answered, "by shooting him with this gun. In the gun is a bullet, a round ball which, when I pull the trigger, will go out of the gun so fast that if it strikes him in the heart or in the head he will fall over and become just like a piece of this rock, and never get up again."

"But I should not like to have him hurt;" she said with tears in her soft eyes. "He has been kind to me."

"We will first try to frighten him so that he will consent to go out ahead of us; that will allow me time to fill a little bag with jewels; the jewels you see I must certainly have before we even try to go back into the world. But I have a great deal to do

before then, and you have something to do. You must make clothes that will cover your arms and your ankles and your feet so that you will not be cold, and so people in the outer world, where we we are going, will not stare too curiously. How long will it take you to do that?"

"You must first tell me what to do." She smiled through her tears.

So Harold tried to tell her something about the dress of girls in the outside world, and, being a very bright child, she readily understood what he meant.

"I will begin at once;" she said. "I learned to sew in my father's palace and have not forgotten. Perhaps in two or three days I shall be ready."

It was now almost time for the giant to return for his dinner, so the boy retired to his little den and waited until afternoon before beginning to carry out his plans. When, however, the giant, having eaten his dinner and taken his usual noonday nap, had started for his afternoon's work, Harold, leaving Alice to her new task as dressmaker, worked his way slowly along the narrow passage through which he had first come. It was late when he reached the little nest where, so cold and hungry, he had slept that night, months

ago; he could hardly believe so wonderful things had really happened since. Early next morning he began to work his way back, widening the passage as he came, and you may well believe that Alice was glad to see him again. When he told her where he had been and what he had been doing she grew so excited that her cheeks became for once almost rosy.

"If that was the route Dor took in the first place, the hill must have settled since," said Harold. "Certainly it is not large enough for him now; yet that is the passage along which I must drive him out before we can safely gather our jewels and follow."

"But how will you drive him? He is so large. He is much stronger and bigger than you."

"I will tell you by and by. My work of widening the passage is not yet finished; but this time, I shall be gone longer than before, so give me enough food to last two or three days."

Before Harold came back this second and last time he had made the channel large enough for the giant to pass through. He found Alice had finished her new clothing according to the ideas which he had given her and, when she had put it on and stood

waiting for him to praise her, he told her that she was truly a wonderful girl. But there was now only a short time left before the giant might be expected to return for his midday meal, and Harold hastened to explain to Alice what she must do.

"When the giant first enters," he said, "you will tell him that some one has come from the outside world. He will want to know where I am so that he may kill me. But you will say to him that this intruder has a magic piece of iron with him; tell him that fire pours out of this magic bar with an awful noise when this terrible stranger says the word, that a ball comes out with the fire and goes to just the point he orders, and that no one, no matter how big a giant, can stand before him. He will answer that he does not believe it; but you must say that the stranger magician is kind and will first show what the magic bar of iron will do. But then Dor must promise to go out of the cave as fast as he can run and never to come back, or he must surely die."

Alice was much frightened at the charge which had been given her and, after taking off her new clothes and putting on her old ones again, she

waited pale and trembling as she listened for the footsteps of the giant. Harold looked carefully to his gun, making sure it was ready for use; then he went back to his little den awaiting the moment which should settle his fortune, and that of little Alice, for good or ill.

At last the resounding tread of Dor was heard along the passageway, and in a moment more his enormous form stood in the room. Alice was almost breathless.

"You said I should tell you," she began, "when any person from the outside world came."

"Yes, yes!" he cried; "and what have you to say?"

"Some one has come;" she answered.

"Where is he? Where is he?" And, catching a great bar of iron from the side of the wall, he fiercely looked about for the intruder.

"Let me explain first;" she said, beginning to take heart. "He is a wonderful magician, and it is of no use for you to fight against him with your bar of iron; he has an iron bar far mightier than yours."

"Is he a giant too," asked Dor, hesitating, "and larger than I?"

"No, no."

"Where is he, then," cried the giant, "that I may crush him to powder?"

"Ah, Dor! but the magic bar of iron which he carries is not one that he has to swing in the air. He simply points it, and at a word, with a terrible roar, fire comes out from it and you fall dead before him."

"And did he tell you this?" cried Dor. "It is a lie."

"Wait," cried Alice, gaining courage as she talked, "until I tell you more. He is kind, as well as powerful. He does not want to kill you, and will not harm a hair of your head if you will consent to go away out of the cave in peace."

"Away out of my own cave," shouted Dor, "and leave you and my jewels here to him? I will never do it."

"Then he will have to kill you."

"But he cannot;" answered the giant boastfully. "I could fight a hundred little men. Where is he?"

"Wait!" she cried again. "He will come forth and show you the magic power of his wonderful bar of iron, and you shall first see what it will do."

Now the giant was afraid of magic, for in the old time when he was in the outside world there was much more talk of it than there is in our time; so he said at last: "If he really is a magician there is of course no use to fight against him. Let us see his wonderful bar of iron and what he can do with it."

At this Harold came out of his little den and stood in the doorway, gun in hand. Alice had arranged a lamp close by the giant's side, in a niche in the rock, and Harold, raising his gun, aimed at the lamp. The boy had told her just what to say to the giant, who had already grasped his iron bar in his hand and made as if to rush on Harold.

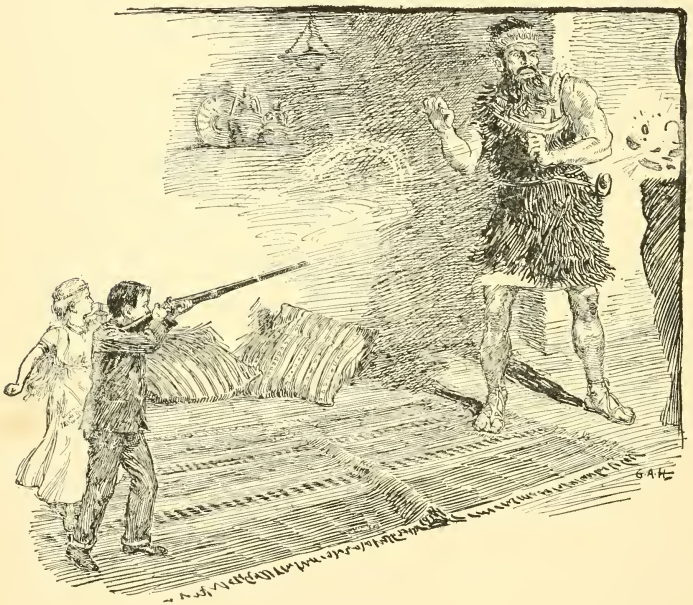
"He will now show you," cried Alice, "that he can point his bar of iron at that lamp by your side, and, at a word, the fire will pour out of his bar and the lamp will be broken into pieces. Shall he say the word?"

"Yes," roared the giant, "let him say the word."

So the boy called at the top of his voice, although his voice sounded almost like a whisper compared with that of Dor in his wrath.

"Now!" and, as he pulled the trigger, fire and

smoke poured from the muzzle with a loud report, and the lamp was shattered into pieces as it stood by the giant's head.



THE GIANT IS BADLY FRIGHTENED.

Quickly slipping another cartridge into its place Harold turned the gun and pointed it at Dor. "Ask him now," cried Harold to Alice, "whether I shall kill him, or will he go out of the cave in peace?"

But the giant only gave one glance of horror to the weapon pointed at him and, throwing his bar of iron on the floor, shouted in a loud voice: "Which way? I have forgotten!" Harold pointed to the passage which he had prepared. Rushing to its entrance, Dor then paused a moment to cast one last look at Alice.

"And shall I never see you again?" he asked piteously.

"Tell him 'perhaps';" said the boy.

"Perhaps you may;" she answered softly, almost sorry for old Dor. Then the giant hesitated and made again as if to leap at Harold, but the boy was not willing to take any chances; aiming at another lamp which stood at the entrance to the passageway he once more pulled the trigger, the flame again poured forth with a deafening noise and that lamp, too, was shattered.

The giant hesitated no longer but rushed out and along the corridor like a whirlwind.

"Now put on your new clothes quickly," said Harold, "while I go and collect in a little bag as many jewels as we can carry with us."

It was a half hour before Harold came back with

his bag filled from the pile of gems in the treasure chamber, and then, hand in hand, leaving the strange old-fashioned lamps still burning in the cave, the two children started out through the passageway along which the giant had rushed a little while before.

They had taken only a few steps when a loud rumbling was heard behind and Alice, looking around in terror, clung closely to Harold while they both stopped for an instant.

"The hill must be settling down on the cavern;" he said. "You remember those great cracks in all the walls? We came out none too soon."

They waited no longer, for the noise grew louder and louder until it was almost deafening, and, as Harold glanced back, he saw the lights in the cave go out. This showed that the hill had already settled down into the very room where they all had been standing a few seconds before.

Taking a firmer hold of the hand of the trembling girl he ran along still faster, fairly dragging her after him; and even then the hill crumbled so quickly behind them that no sooner would they take a step forward than some pieces of broken rock dropped in their footprints, and, as they burst

through at last into the outer cave, the opening through which they came closed almost as soon as they passed through it.

They did not stop a moment in the outside cave, but hurried into the woods. Then Alice could stand no longer but sank, almost fainting, beneath a tree, while Harold, bold and strong as he was, trembled in every limb.

It was indeed a narrow escape. If the giant had been near at the time he would have felt like thanking Harold for driving him away from the Enchanted Cave, which, if they had remained there only a few seconds longer, would have been their common tomb.

The boy and girl rested under the tree for a time, listening to the terrible rumblings underneath the hill, and hardly daring to think how nearly they had been buried there; but when at last the rumblings ceased they soon recovered from their terror and fatigue. Alice now began asking questions about the wonderful things which she saw about her, so different from anything she had known in her life in the cave; and Harold did his best to explain about the trees, the wild flowers, the green grass, the blue sky, the birds, the sunlight, and the brooks.

"But we must hurry on;" he said after he saw that his companion was not likely to be easily satisfied in her questioning. "We have very far to go before we reach my mother and our future home."

Soon they came into a village where Alice saw no end of people and was so much astonished she could not speak. Harold asked the way to his old home and, when he was told how far off it was, he knew his little princess could not endure so long a walk. Then he thought of the jewels which he had about him; a small gem was sufficient to hire a very nice carriage for them and to buy plenty of food for their journey; and so they started on what afterward Alice always remembered as the most delightful trip of her life.

Everything was new, everything seemed beautiful to her; the brave boy who had saved her was by her side; she had no fear for the future, and all her long past seemed like an almost forgotten dream to her.

At last the carriage drew near a little cottage, the poorest in a whole village, and after Harold had helped Alice out, he sent the carriage away. Then

the two children walked up the well-worn path to the house where Harold was born.

He had hardly put his foot on the step when the door swung open and his mother rushed to meet him. She took her son in her arms and hugged him as if she should never let him go. Tears of joy ran down her cheeks.

At last she seemed to notice that a pretty little girl was standing by him smiling sweetly and as much interested in the meeting as if it were herself who was being hugged and kissed.

"And who is this, my son?" she said.

"This is Alice," Harold answered, "my new friend, and I want you to take her as your daughter."

"What a dear little girl!" cried his mother, kissing her. "And where did you find Alice, my son?"

"It is a long story, mother;" he said. "After we are rested I will tell you. We have travelled a long way to-day."

Then she took them inside the little house and, seating them both on a bench, bustled about to find something for them to eat.

Now his brothers and sisters came hurrying in, and all had to hug their brother and kiss their new

sister and ask questions which there was no time to answer.

But while the mother had been out of the room she had had time to think, and to wonder where the food was coming from to feed her hungry boy who had returned, to say nothing of the little girl whom he had brought with him. As she remembered the clothes that the children wore she saw no hint of any fortune, and it was a very sorrowful woman that returned to them.

"There is nothing in the house to eat," she said to her husband who had by this time come in, tired from his hard day's work, "even for us, to say nothing of Harold and this dear little girl. What a sad home-coming this is, after all!"

Then the small brothers and sisters began to whimper and cry, and the father's face fell as he turned away in grief.

This was Harold's chance and, rising from the bench, he drew his bag from beside him and showed its store of jewels.

"I have found my fortune," he said, "enough for me, little Alice, and you all. We shall never know hunger or want again."

Theirs was a happy household that night.

In a few years Harold had grown to manhood, and Alice, taken away from the Enchanted Cave, had at last become a woman. Of course they were married and lived happily ever after.

They had been married only a year when a circus with wonderful curiosities came to town, and the whole family left the grand house, in which they now lived, and went to see the show. In a side tent a giant was on exhibition, and, being especially interested in giants, Harold and Alice went in to see him.

What was their surprise to find that the giant was no other than their old friend Dor, whose long whiskers had been cut off, and who now wore the ordinary clothes of people of the day and had become a very fat and happy-looking giant indeed.

Without saying who they were, Harold and Alice talked with him, and Dor told them that he was married, and finally insisted on sending out to bring in his wife.

"I chose her," he said, "because she looked like a little girl whom I dearly loved many years ago, but who never seemed to grow old enough to be married."

But when his wife was brought in she turned out to be very fat and clumsy-looking, looking, indeed, no more like Alice than the giant himself looked like Harold.

STORY OF THE BAD BOY

SAMMY HAWKINS was a very bad boy. Everybody said so. He had not a friend in the world, except, perhaps, his elder brother with whom he lived, and who was fully as bad as himself.

I dislike to mention the evil things that Sammy did. He was a dirty boy; he seemed to love dirt and certainly hated to wash himself. He was a cruel boy; it was sport to him to torment dumb animals as well as little girls and boys. He would not tell the truth even when it would serve him as well as a lie; he seemed to love a lie because it was one. He was a thief and was in the habit of taking anything which he could lay his hands on. He used language so bad that few of the words he used were such as could properly be repeated here.

Sammy enjoyed throwing stones at cats and dogs or tying tin cans to the tails of the poor creatures and watching their terror and misery. He found pleasure in picking quarrels, and in striking and

kicking other boys. He amused himself by rudeness to little girls, tearing their clothes, pulling off their hats, and otherwise plaguing them as only evil boys know how to do.

He had very little to eat, and not enough clothes to keep him comfortable in cool weather; no one had kind words for him; everybody looked upon him as a little thief and rascal; but he found his happiness in making other people unhappy.

Whipping seemed to do him no good, scolding only made him laugh; each day he grew worse, until boys ran when they saw him on the street, little girls screamed when he came near them, and older people watched closely whenever he came their way to see what mischief he might be about. He was altogether the worst boy that was ever seen in the village; and people were only waiting impatiently for the time when he would be old enough to shut behind bars.

One night when Sammy came home from a day of mischief-making he found his brother absent. He was not surprised at this as his brother often came home very late at night, but when the boy awoke next morning to find himself still alone he thought

it time to ask questions. His brother had broken into a house, it seemed, and was now in jail; the neighbors told Sammy that it would be many years before he saw him again. But Sammy, too, knew

THE FAIRIES TALK OVER SAMMY'S CASE.

how to steal and was not at all in doubt as to being able to get all he wanted to eat; so, as his brother had not been any too kind to him, the boy did not much care if he should never see him again.

Fairies do not generally care anything about bad

boys, but for some reason they had always had their eyes on Sammy: And who knows but he might have been killed long before in some of his mad pranks if it had not been for them? So now, that he was left without any sort of human friend or protector, they made up their minds that the time had come for them to see what they could do for him. Everybody else had given him up; he seemed to be pointed in the straight path for the jail where his brother was walled in, certain to grow up worse as a man than he had been as a boy.

The first thing to do was to get hold of him, and, knowing his disposition, one of the fairies changed herself into a little white dog, with a pretty gold bell about her neck, and trotted up and down in front of the house where he lived. No sooner had the boy come out of his door than his eyes fell on the pretty creature. Even if the dog had not worn a gold bell Sammy would have chased her out of mere mischief, but when he noticed the bell he saw it was something well worth stealing.

The dog trotted along quite slowly, and Sammy thought she must be either tired or sick, and that it would be a very easy thing to catch her. But when

he quickened his gait the dog seemed able to quicken hers, always keeping just the same distance between them.

In running and walking Sammy had passed over several miles, expecting almost every minute to overtake the remarkable little creature. Then, getting out of temper, he made up his mind to kill her. Angrily picking up the biggest stones from the roadside, he began to throw them at her as fast as he could. He was a very good marksman but somehow he could not hit this moving target; no matter how straight he threw a stone it seemed to turn aside just before it reached her. Then he consoled himself with the thought that, after all, it would be better to take the dog alive and sell her; and he again started forward after the intelligent creature which always trotted ahead only just fast enough to keep out of his reach, as if planning to lead him along.

And so it kept on all that day. When the boy stopped the dog stopped; when the boy started again the dog started. Sometimes he tried to call her to him by soft words, but she only barked and still kept her distance. Finally, as night was coming on,

he began to think it was time to go back home again, —and besides he was very hungry by this time.— But when he looked about him he found that he was in a country he had never seen before. He had no idea he had come so far.

Just as Sammy was about turning around to try to find his way home, very much out of temper to think that he had not succeeded in catching the dog, a beautiful marble palace came in sight as if it had suddenly risen out of the ground. A long flight of marble steps led up to the wide open front door. The dog ran up the steps and through the door, and Sammy saw her no more. He was a curious boy, however, and was now unwilling to go back without learning what sort of place this was that he had come upon. So he climbed the marble steps and, when he reached the open door and found no one there, he went inside hoping, bad boy as he was, that he might find something to steal. But when he entered the open door it closed behind him, and, for the first time in his life, he felt rather uneasy. He tried the door but was unable to open it again. Just then, however, he heard steps on the grand staircase, and a beautiful lady dressed in silks,

her fingers glistening with diamonds, appeared in sight and in a moment more stood before him.

"I am glad you have come;" she said. "You must be tired."

She put out her beautiful white hand and took his own rough and dingy one in it, just as if he had not been a dirty and bad boy. Sammy did not know what to say, so, showing a wisdom lacked in like case by many older and better persons, he said nothing.

"You must be hungry;" she went on.

"Yes, I am;" agreed Sammy.

"Dinner is ready;" she said. "It has been waiting for you an hour."

It was the first time in the boy's life that dinner had ever been waiting for him, and he did not know what to make of it. But it suddenly occurred to him, as he looked at the white hands and the beautiful gown of his hostess, that he was hardly fit to sit down at a meal with such as she.

"Perhaps you would like to go to the bath-room before dinner?" she said. Sammy did not know what a bath-room was, but he thought, as long as everything was being made so pleasant for him, it

would be best for him to answer "yes" to whatever was suggested.

Then the lady rang a bell and a boy in a blue suit with brass buttons came along the hall.

"Show this young gentleman to the bath-room," said the lady, "and then bring him down to dinner."

Sammy, feeling very proud to be called a young gentleman, remarked carelessly as he followed the boy: "Pretty good place this!"

"Here is the bath-room;" said the boy in blue, at last, holding a door open for Sammy to enter. "I will wait for you outside."

The little room had a porcelain bath-tub, with the finest of linen towels hanging on the racks and sweet-scented soap at hand. Over a chair were beautiful clothes, complete even to the stockings, and shoes on the floor beneath.

The tub was full of water, and Sammy strangely enough guessed correctly what the water was for. In a few minutes he emerged from the tub a very different-looking boy indeed. He did not hesitate to put on the clothes which he saw over the chair. To tell the truth, he was not particular whether they belonged to him or not as long as he could get them on.

Then, finding a brush and comb at hand, he stepped in front of the glass to give the finishing touches to his toilet. For a moment he did not know himself in the mirror, and it was only after making three or

SAMMY HAS TAKEN HIS FIRST BATH.

four of the ugly faces with which he used to frighten little girls that he was sure he was the same Sammy.

No sooner had he finished brushing his hair than a tap on the door reminded him that the boy in uniform was still waiting outside, and it was with quite

a swagger that Sammy swung out of the room and followed his new acquaintance down-stairs. Then double doors opened showing a long table covered with beautiful china and silverware. All the seats but one were filled, some with boys and girls of about his own age, and dressed as nicely as himself, and others with ladies as beautiful as she who had met him at the door. His little guide drew back a chair for him, and Sammy sat down hardly knowing whether he was really himself.

But the smell of the good things to eat soon brought him to his senses, and he lost no time in helping himself. On one side of him sat a girl with yellow curls and the softest blue eyes, and on the other side a bright-looking boy; both of them spoke to him, but Sammy was so greedy that he did not stop to make answer until after his mouth was full, and then he could not speak. While his mouth was full, however, he looked about and had a chance to notice that neither the boy nor the girl, nor indeed anybody else at the table seemed to take food to the mouth as he had done. No one said anything to him about it, but before Sammy began eating again he looked about his plate for a fork such as he saw the others

using and, although he was confident he could not get as much into his mouth at a time with the fork as he had done with a knife, still he preferred to do as the rest did.

When, after a little while, the girl again spoke to him he answered her, and did his best to leave rough words out of his talk, although it was very hard for Sammy to say ten words unless at least half of them were bad ones.

It seemed to him that he never ate so much in his life before. Never before had he had enough, even of bread and salt pork, and you may guess how much he ate to-day of these wonderful kinds of food which almost melted in his mouth, hungry as he was besides.

Sammy did not know how tired he was until he had had enough to eat, and then, although he tried to be pleasant to the boy and girl who sat on either side, his eyes kept closing in spite of himself. So he was very glad when some one at the other end of the table arose, and everybody else then stood up and began to pass out of the room.

"I am so tired;" said Sammy to his little boy neighbor; "I feel as if I could drop down."

"You want to go to bed," the little boy said. "I will find where your room is."

And such a room as it was which Sammy was ushered into! The bedstead was of brass shining like pure gold. High pillows were at one end, and the coverlid was of silk and velvet, and was pulled back to reveal the white sheets where he should lie. Such a bed might tempt one who was not sleepy, but poor, tired Sammy could hardly wait until he was alone.

"You will find your nightgown on the back of the bed;" said the boy in blue. Sammy did not know what a nightgown was; he had always slept in his clothes, and the only reason he did not sleep in shoes was that he seldom had any. But the new thing interested him, so, instead of climbing into the bed with his clothes on, as he had intended, he undressed like a civilized boy, put on his nightgown and crept in between the sheets. No sooner had his head touched the pillow than the lights went out and he was in the land of dreams.

A very surprised boy was Sammy when he opened his eyes the next morning and found himself lying in a real bed, between real sheets, with a real silk

coverlid over him, wearing a real nightgown, and his head resting on real pillows. He could not believe his eyes; he supposed that he must be still dreaming, and that what he remembered as having happened the night before was part of the dream. As he looked about the room and saw the graceful furniture and the bright carpet, he rubbed his eyes very hard to awake himself. When the things which he saw did not disappear after he rubbed his eyes, Sammy jumped out of bed, thinking, even now, that, when he shook himself, dreamland would fade out of sight, and he would find himself back in his own miserable room and still clad in his dirty and ragged clothes. But nothing faded away. A gentle knock sounded on the door, instead, and, in a moment, the boy in blue with brass buttons came inside.

"You will find the bath-room just behind;" he said, "through that open door. Breakfast is almost ready."

Now Sammy could not understand, since he had washed himself the night before, why he needed another bath again so soon. But now that, for the first time in his life, everybody was treating him well, he

did not choose to begin thus early to be disagreeable; so he made his way into the bath-room and took another dip in the tub. Returning, he was expecting to dress himself in the clothes which he had worn the night before, when, thrown over the foot of the bed, he noticed another suit, just as clean as the first, and almost as pretty, he thought, but more fitted for play, which he lost no time in putting on. Then, after brushing his hair so that it was even smoother than last night, he stepped to the door and found his little friend in blue waiting for him outside.

He was taken down to the same room where he had enjoyed that wonderful dinner the night before, and found the same company waiting for him, with the same little boy and girl on either side of him, and just as good things to eat although very different ones. This time Sammy did not even touch his fingers to the meat or potatoes, or once put his knife to his mouth. He tried his best to eat just like the little gentleman and lady who sat on either side of him, and succeeded remarkably well for a beginner.

"We shall have a good chance to play after breakfast;" said the boy on his left.

"Yes," said the girl on his right, "we have such a lovely playground."

And soon Sammy was passing along the grand halls of the beautiful building, one hand held by his new girl friend and the other by the boy on their way to play.

Indeed it was a fine playground. There was a ball field, and a pond where boys were rowing or sailing little toy ships, or wading above their knees; there were great heaps of sand where smaller children were digging; there were goats hitched to wagons with regular harnesses, and little boys driving them; there were boards for boys to saw and cut, and nails for them to hammer; there were little brooks where other boys were fishing; and, what surprised him as much as anything, there were fruit trees, the boughs of which were heavy with apples, pears, peaches, and plums, all dead ripe and free to pick. Although the children were running hither and thither, and playing all the games which healthy boys and girls love so well, no one used a bad word, or was rough or rude to another.

Now Sammy had never really played in his life. The only sort of sport he had truly enjoyed was

tormenting some girl or boy, or abusing a dumb animal. So it was quite a while before he learned how to play with these children. Several times he forgot himself, and pushed or struck one of his new friends, and then he would stop and look about him expecting to be seized by the collar and dragged off to be whipped. But the only punishment he received was the sorrowful look on the faces of those who noticed his rude behavior, and that somehow hurt him more than a whip would have done. Every one was kind to him, showed him the new games, picked the nicest fruit for him, gave him the best boats to row, the nicest poles to fish with, the nicest goat wagon to drive, and soon Sammy had stopped even wanting to be rude or coarse. It seemed the easiest thing in the world for him to be a gentle and good boy.

Sammy had always looked upon a school as the worst place in the world, but the very second day after coming to this wonderful palace he was taken to the fairies' school and found it fully as pleasant to learn under their teaching as it was to play. And he seemed to learn fast too; it was almost as if a hole were made in the top of his head and knowledge poured into it.

But, after Sammy had lived in this beautiful place for a number of months, an evil spirit came upon him one day while at play with his friends, and all of a sudden a stream of shocking words poured out of his mouth. His new friends looked much frightened, and it was only a moment before one of the fairies was by his side and shaking a little wand over his head. What she meant to do with the wand Sammy had no idea, but if she supposed it was going to stop his wicked talk she was very much mistaken, for he only waited long enough to take breath before he began again. To his astonishment, every evil word, as it passed out of his mouth turned now into a fiery dart which burned his lips as it passed through them, and which, striking those to whom he was talking, pierced their skin and made them scream with pain.

But it was no later than the very next day that Sammy disobeyed the commands of one of the fairies, and made a bad matter worse by telling a lie about it. When she shook her wand over him he saw his lie change into a long, wriggling snake, with wicked bead-like eyes and a fork-like tongue.

Another day he lost his temper with a goat that

was hitched to a wagon and, breaking a bough from one of the bushes, he began to beat the little beast very cruelly with it. What was Sammy's surprise when, instead of the plaintive cry which he had expected, the animal turned his head toward him and began to talk in Sammy's language just as a boy might. "Don't you know," the goat said to the boy, who dropped his stick and opened his mouth in astonishment to hear a goat talk, "that it hurts me just as much as it would hurt you to be pounded with a stick? If I don't do what you want to have me do, it is because I don't understand what you want, or because I am not strong enough to do it. It is very unkind of you to beat an animal!" Great tears ran down the goat's hairy cheeks and he sobbed like a child. It was not necessary for any more of the animals about the fairy palace to talk to Sammy in order to teach him that animals had feelings like his own.

Another day the boy had a lazy fit and, when the school-bell rang and the other children left the playground for their lessons, he crawled behind a thick bush, having made up his mind to enjoy a nap instead of doing anything like work that morning.

But, all of a sudden, there came marching around the corner of the bush a crowd of little men, each with a hammer and handful of long spikes in his hands. They said never a word but, scattering all about him, went to work to nail him to the ground, fastening him by his clothes, through the corners and folds of which they drove the spikes with all their might and main. At first Sammy thought it a great joke to see the little men work so hard while such a big fellow as he lay out in the warm sunlight doing nothing at all but enjoying himself. It was not long, however, before he found out that they were working to some purpose, since, when he tried to turn over, he found he could not move at all. He began to grow very uncomfortable and begged them very loudly to let him go. But either they were too small to have ears or they did not want to hear, for they went right on with their work, fastening him more securely to the earth every minute, until, after their captain had fully inspected the job and was satisfied that Sammy could not get up, they went back around the bush, and he saw them no more.

So Sammy lay there in the sun which grew hotter

every minute and, although he shouted at the top of his voice for help, no one came to his relief. How he wished all that long forenoon that he had gone to school! He remembered how cool and fresh was the air where the other girls and boys were studying their lessons. He could not understand what had made him want to play truant and prefer to idle through the forenoon rather than study. At last the tears, running down his cheeks, washed away the earth which had held some of the nails in place so that Sammy was able to move his head a little from side to side, which was some relief. But no time was ever so long for him as that half day, and no voice ever before sounded so pleasant as that of the fairy school-teacher when, accompanied by her band of children, she came out into the grounds again.

His friends lost no time in pulling up the nails which had fastened him so securely and wiping the tears and dust from his little sunburned face. But nobody scolded or asked him any hard questions. All knew that Sammy had learned another lesson never to forget.

As it drew toward the end of the year which

Sammy Hawkins was to pass in fairyland he had grown to be one of the best-behaved boys in the whole place. No one would have supposed that he had ever been cruel or disobedient, had ever used evil words, or told lies, or loved to be unkind. The fairies were very proud of their work in curing a bad boy, and were looking for some way to get him back again into the world where he could do some good.

Now it so happened that not far from the fairy palace lived a man and his wife who had lost a son and could not be comforted, as he had been a sweet and noble boy and a great joy to them. So one of the fairies, taking pity on the unhappy pair, went to their bedside one night and caused the father to dream. And the dream was that a boy of just the age and size of his own lost boy came down the street in front of his house and stopped at the gate, walked up to the front door and knocked upon it; and that the boy, who he thought was very much like his own son that had died, told him, while his wife stood by, that he was very tired and hungry and asked if they would not let him rest a little; that, after he had rested and been given something to

eat, they asked him about his father and mother and his home, and that he told them he had none; that they then looked at each other, and, both thinking the same thing, they asked him if he would not like to live with them and be their son.

And just then the man awoke and, wakening his wife, told her his dream. They lay there talking about it, and crying over their boy that had died, almost until morning.

So that very morning the queen of the fairies came to Sammy as soon as he was dressed and said that it was time for him to go out into the world again; he had come to them a bad boy, and they had made him a good boy; he had come ignorant, and he had become intelligent. She told him that there were a man and a woman living in a town not far away who wanted for their son just such a boy as he; he could make their hearts glad and have every help to grow up to be a good man himself.

"Oh, why must I go?" whimpered the boy at the thought of leaving this beautiful fairyland. But the fairy queen told him to walk along a wide street with maple trees on either side until he came to a house with a brown front and iron steps running up

to it, with a certain number on the door; that he must go up to the door and ring the bell, and when a man should come to the door he must tell him that he was tired and hungry.

Sammy began to cry, but as soon as the fairy had kissed him on his forehead she disappeared, and the room in which Sammy was standing disappeared, and the palace in which the room was disappeared, and the grounds in which the palace stood disappeared. Sammy found himself once more in the same field where he had been chasing the little white dog a year before. He was as tired and hungry now as he was then, although he was no longer dirty, and really did not look at all like the same boy.

He walked along the road which was close at hand until it brought him to a town and, walking down the shaded street as he had been told, he came to a house with a brown front and iron steps, and with the certain number on the door. His little heart in his throat with excitement, he went up the steps and knocked. The door was opened by a gentleman with the kindest face he had ever seen, and right behind him, peering over his shoulder, was his wife, as kind and sweet as himself; and both of them looked

so surprised and so happy that Sammy did not understand it at all, or know what they meant when they both cried at once: "It is the very boy!"

They did not even wait for Sammy to say he was hungry or tired but, taking him into the dining-

Sammy welcomed to his New Home.

room, set the best in the house before him; and no sooner had he eaten than they both asked him, almost at once, how he would like to live always with them and to be their little son.

STORY OF THE GOLDEN KEY

TOMMY JONES had brothers and sisters in plenty but very little of anything else. His father did the best he could to feed and clothe a large family, and his mother did all that any woman could do; but many a night the children had to go supperless to bed, and the beds were none too warm. Tommy was only ten years old and could not do much to help, but he always did his best and he tried hard not to cry when he was hungry.

One afternoon he went into the woods near the little house where he lived; he was in search of chestnuts which he knew, in lack of anything else, would serve him and his brothers and sisters for supper. He had just filled his pockets when he heard a pitiful mewing. Being kind-hearted he looked everywhere for the cat which he supposed must be in trouble. At last he saw her in the branches of a tall tree where her foot seemed to be caught. He called to her and she answered with more mewing

GOING TO THE CAT'S RESCUE.

and a struggle to free her foot, as if showing him her trouble and asking him to come to her help.

Now Tommy was a pretty good climber, but this was a very high tree with no branches near the ground. He threw off his coat, however, and began to climb, and he was halfway up to the cat before he looked down at the ground which seemed so far away that it made him dizzy. He had half a mind to go back; but when he stopped climbing the

cat mewed so much louder that, looking down no more, he began climbing up again as fast as possible.

He found the cat's foot was bleeding and very sore, having been caught fast in the fork of two branches. She could never have freed herself without the help which the boy set promptly at work to give. It was a slow task, as he needed one of his hands to hold fast lest he fall, while it hurt the cat if he did not work very carefully. But at last she was free and, jumping on his shoulder, began purring and rubbing herself against his face as he made his way down the tree not daring to look at the ground for fear it would make him dizzy again.

No sooner had he reached the ground and drawn a full breath than the cat sprang off his shoulder and he saw her no more. But just at the foot of the tree he saw a little blue ribbon, such as pets sometimes wear about their necks, and fastened to it was a card and a yellow key; the key was quite heavy and appeared to be of gold. He began to call the cat thinking it would be wrong for him to keep the key which had been on her neck; but when she did not come he turned the card over in his hand, expecting to find the name of her owner. Although

there was no name on the card there were some words written in pencil and which he had to study to make out. This was what he finally read aloud to himself: "This Golden Key is a present for the boy who was kind to a suffering animal."

Tommy had had no dinner that day, and it quickly occurred to him that if the key were really of gold it would not take him long to turn it into bread and meat. So a moment later he was running into the village, all the while thinking how happy his father and mother and his brothers and sisters would be when he brought back to them plenty to eat for once.

He had come near the store where he meant to sell the Golden Key when an old woman, who had been walking very slowly, turned around and spoke to him. Tommy had always been taught to be respectful to older persons and, in spite of his hurry, he stopped now to ask what she might want. She replied in a very feeble voice saying that she would like to lean on his shoulder while she walked along. Some of Tommy's little friends happened to be near by, and he knew they would afterward laugh at him if he were seen walking along the street in such company;

besides, he was in a great hurry to exchange his Golden Key for bread and meat: But he patiently trudged along beside the old woman who leaned very heavily on his small but faithful shoulder.

When they reached a large oak-tree that stood in front of the village store the old woman stopped, but she still kept her hand on Tommy's shoulder. She asked him what it was in his hand and where he had found it, and Tommy, who had always been honest and straightforward, told the whole story, and also what he was planning to do with the key.

Then the old woman said: "You were a good boy to take pity on a cat, and you have shown yourself still better by helping an old woman like me when you were in such a hurry and when you knew you would be laughed at. Now I will tell you what to do with your Golden Key. Don't take it to the store but keep it safely until to-night. Be at this tree where we now stand when the clock strikes twelve and, if you are brave and wise, you will have a chance to make your fortune." The words had no sooner gone out of the old woman's mouth than her heavy hand was lifted from the boy's shoulder

and, when he turned quickly around to question her she was nowhere to be seen.

Tommy did not go into the store with his key, as he had intended to do, but turned around and walked slowly home; indeed he could not help thinking how pleasant it would have been to take with him those good things which he had been planning to buy.

All they had to eat in Tommy's house that night was a crust of dry bread, with plenty of water and some of the chestnuts which the boy took out of his pocket and his mother boiled. It was not much like the supper which he had expected to bring home.

Now the boy kept no secrets from his mother, and had no idea of stealing out of the house at night and down to the big oak-tree unless she gave him leave. But he did not have any chance to speak to her alone that evening, for all the members of that family were wont to go early to bed so that they could forget how hungry they were. All except Tommy went quickly to sleep; he was so excited as he thought of the wonderful things which had happened to him that afternoon that he did not feel like closing

his eyes. But when he was sure everybody else was asleep he rose from the little pile of straw, which was the only bed he knew, and crept softly over to where his mother was sleeping. He had no sooner put his hand upon her than she awoke quickly, as mothers will, and asked him what was the matter.

Then Tommy told her in a whisper all about the cat and the Golden Key, and about the old woman who had promised him a fortune. At first his mother thought her boy was dreaming, and she told him to go to sleep again; but when he showed her the little Golden Key with its blue silk ribbon she saw that was too real to belong to a dream. She asked her little son if he would not be afraid to go down to the tree so late at night and he said "yes" but still he would go if she were willing. His mother then told him to lie down and sleep and she would call him when it was time to start.

It did not seem to Tommy as if he had been sleeping more than a minute when his mother wakened him with a kiss and told him it was time to go. She again asked him if he were not afraid, and offered to go with him, but Tommy said the old woman had not said he might bring any one and

perhaps would not like it if he should. So he kissed his mother good-bye and trudged out manfully into the dark, although, to tell the truth, his heart was beating very fast. He walked a few steps and then ran until he had come nearly to the big oak-tree, when he saw, lying on the ground, a man with a pale face, looking very sick indeed; he held out a cup and asked the boy to take it to the brook near by and fill it with water which he said he thought would make him feel better. Now Tommy feared that he was already late, and that if he were to do as the sick man asked it would be past twelve o'clock before he could get to the oak-tree, and so he would lose all chance of the promised fortune. But for all that he took the cup and ran back toward the brook. In the light of the moon Tommy saw that the vessel in his hand was of pure gold and, being much larger than the Golden Key, he was quite sure could be sold for enough money to buy bread and meat for a long time. It would be easy for him to run off with it since the sick man certainly would not be able to overtake him. But the boy felt ashamed that so mean a thought should even enter his mind.

When he came back with the golden cup full of

water the man drank hastily and then rose to his feet saying he felt very much better and walked along with the boy. Just as they reached the big oak-tree, while Tommy was looking all about for some sign of the fortune which he had been promised, the man said to him: —

"I know that you were in a hurry when you found me lying in the path, but still you went back after the water for me without any complaint; I know, too, that the gold cup must have tempted you; but I see that you are a kind and honest boy, deserving of a fortune, and this is the way that leads to it." And as he spoke he laid his hand upon the tree and to Tommy's surprise where he had noticed only ordinary bark before, he now saw a door large enough for him to enter; but the door was fastened with a padlock.

"The little Golden Key will unlock this padlock," continued the man, "and then you can open the door. Go in and fear nothing. It is only the bad who need be afraid."

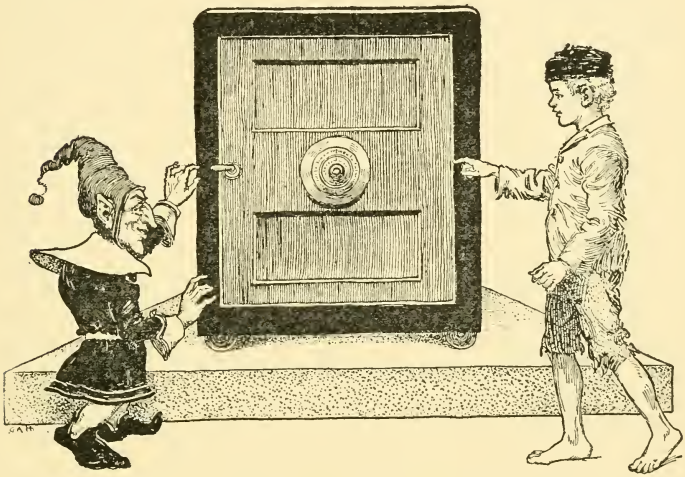
The boy drew out from his pocket the little Golden Key and fitting it in the lock found that the key turned and the door opened. As he looked

around to ask an eager question the sick man was nowhere in sight. And just then the bell in the village church began to toll for twelve o'clock.

It looked very gloomy within but Tommy thought he would at least step just inside and then, if he chose, it would be easy to come out again. No sooner, however, was he inside the door than it closed very softly behind him and, although he felt all about in the darkness, he could find no knob. From the outside the tree had not looked so very large, and the boy was much surprised to see in front of him quite a long hallway with a light at the other end. Not being able to get back he had to go forward. When he came to the end of the hallway he found himself in a small room at one side of which was an iron safe; in front of the safe door stood a little man with a high pointed cap of red whose feet seemed to grow right out of the lower part of his body. The goblin looked very severe, and Tommy was more afraid than ever, but there was nothing to do but speak to him. He supposed that the fortune he had been promised would be in the safe.

"Will you please open that safe for me?" he boldly asked the goblin.

Just then loud voices were heard which seemed to come from within the safe, and the growling of fierce dogs; and the goblin said to Tommy: "Are you not afraid?"



THE GOBLIN ON GUARD.

"Yes, I am," answered the boy, "but even so I must go in." At that the severe face became pleasant, and without more ado the goblin touched the handle and the safe door flew open. As Tommy bent down to look in, he saw no dogs, such as he had supposed would be inside, or evil sprites or other terrible creatures to hurt him, but

neither did he see any bags of gold nor the precious jewels which he had expected. Indeed, there were no drawers or shelves at all in the safe; it seemed to be just the opening to a gloomy passage not as high as his head at the outset, and which seemed to grow smaller farther along. But he had a stout heart to try if a fortune were really waiting for him. So he stepped inside the safe door and, bending his head, began to push along the narrow passageway.

Almost at once he found that he must drop on his knees in order to make any headway at all, and he had hardly done that when he heard the safe door clang behind him. For a moment he felt sick at heart and began to wish he had not set out to seek his fortune. Still he kept creeping along on his hands and knees while the passage kept growing narrower and lower until at last he had to crawl on his stomach like a mole in its burrow. It was then that he caught a glimmer of light ahead and began to hope that he might soon get out of this terrible place. But the opening still grew smaller and smaller until he was just about to give up trying to go any farther, and making up his mind to go back and beat on the safe door and beseech the dwarf to let him out.

Now suddenly he found himself at the end of the tunnel, and in a moment, after a last tight squeeze, he burst into a large and well-lighted room.

The room was filled with a gay company of boys and girls in silks and velvets, singing and dancing as if there were nothing to do in this world but to have a good time. Tommy at first felt very much out of place in such a company; his own clothes were so poor and his feet bare. He was much pleased, then, when they gathered about as if very glad to see him, not seeming to notice his rags. They all began asking him questions: Where he had come from, where he was going, how old he was, and last and best of all, as he thought, if he were hungry.

Tommy answered the last question first with a very loud "yes"; and it was not a minute before he found himself seated at a table covered with the whitest of cloth, while before him were dishes filled with things to eat. The poor boy had never had much to eat besides bread and potatoes, and little enough of those, — even butter was a curiosity in his house, — and had never smelled anything so nice as the food which was now set before him. He did not wait, however, to ask any questions but,

helping himself from the nearest dish, he improved his time as only a hungry boy can do.

When he rose from the table his new friends proposed a game of "tag," and Tommy joined in great delight. When they were tired of "tag" then "hunt the slipper" was proposed, and the frolic was just at its height when Tommy suddenly recollected that he had come looking for his fortune and not so much for fun. So he broke off in the middle of the game and said he could not stay longer. The boys and girls gathered thick about him and begged him to play just a little more, but Tommy insisted that he must go at once and seek his fortune. And just at that moment he saw a door in the opposite side of the room and began to make his way toward it.

But his little friends, who before had been so pleasant, now became very angry, calling him disagreeable names, mocking his rags, pointing at his bare feet, and altogether making Tommy feel thoroughly ashamed. But at last he broke away from all of them and, opening the door, passed out.

Then, as he looked about him, he was glad that he had not wasted any more time in play for, sure

enough, right before his eyes was a fortune,— silver in all shapes, money, beautiful vases, and ornaments, enough he was sure to buy a whole village.

Tommy saw, as he looked about him, a number of other little boys gazing longingly at the treasure: Some were ragged and bare-legged; others wore pretty clothes and looked as if they had never been hungry in their lives. For a minute he wondered why they did not all run over to where the silver lay and help themselves, there seemed so much of it in sight. But, as he took a few steps that way, he saw that, although the treasure was not far off there appeared to be a million sharp thorns sticking up to wound the feet of any one who should try to reach it. Many of the thorns were red as if from the wounds of those who had fallen on them. As he looked more closely, however, he could see, planted among the thorns, very small stepping-stones, no one of them large enough to hold the whole of even a very small boy's foot, and not too near together at that.

While Tommy stood looking, one of the boys who had been standing near him made a start for the treasure but, after stepping on two or three of the

stones, came back faster than he went, crying out that the stones were hot. Three or four others, who had been ready to follow, drew back when he returned, and gathered around him listening to his complaints and now afraid to try the passage for themselves. But Tommy could see several boys helping themselves to the silver treasure, and he reminded himself that there was no way for them to get to it, any more than for him, except over the thorns and the hot stepping-stones; since they had crossed he, too, ought to be brave enough to try the passage. He thought of his poor parents, and of his brothers and sisters so hungry at home, and finally set his lips and made up his mind that he would delay no longer.

When he went down to the edge of the thorny way the other boys came near either to advise him not to go or to watch him if he should set out. Some of them told him that he would tear his flesh on the thorns, and others reminded him that he would burn his feet on the hot stones. A few said that the thorns were not so very sharp or the stones so very hot. But Tommy determined not to mind what any of them said and, drawing in a deep breath, he stepped

boldly out on the first stone, which he found fully as hot as any one had reported. As he stepped over to the second he found it no cooler; surely the bottoms of his feet were blistering. The boys whom he had just left behind watched him with great interest and kept shouting all kinds of messages to him; he would have thought more of messages from the other side, if any had been sent; but it seemed as if those who had once passed over to the treasure lost all interest in their old companions.

When Tommy was halfway across his foot slipped on one of the smaller stones, and he fell flat on the thorns tearing a great new rent in his clothes and making the blood flow from his knees. He could only raise himself to his feet after painful wounds to his hands and wrists, and once more he almost wished that he had not left his own home to go seeking for a fortune. The "I told you so" shouts of the boys whom he had left behind did not comfort him at all and, as he struggled to his feet again, and tried his best to get along, he noticed the boys who were on the other side now watching him with interest, but not with the good cheer he would have liked.

The last half of the way was much easier than the first; the stones grew gradually cooler and the thorns were more scattered until at last he reached the place where the treasure lay. Now he turned, for the first time, to look back and saw that two other boys had started to follow him. One of them, after getting almost halfway, had already turned about to go back, and the other, even farther along, had stopped and seemed just ready to give it up. So Tommy, remembering how he had longed for encouragement, called back to the hesitating traveler that it would be easier the rest of the way, and the little fellow took new heart and came all the way over. Then he and Tommy went up to the stores of silver which they had so well earned, and filled their pockets to the bursting point.

While they were still loading themselves with the treasures of silver they saw boys who had come over before them passing, one after another, out of doors to the right and left. But just as Tommy started to go after them he saw one little fellow walk up to a door which he had not noticed before; this door led straight ahead. Now Tommy felt in great haste to get home to his mother with the

treasure which he had gained. He had been picturing to himself, as he filled his pockets, how astonished she would look when he walked in upon her with his fortune won so easily. But before he went home he would at least find out what was beyond that other door leading straight ahead through which only one boy had gone; so, his little friend by his side, he turned the knob and looked in.

The treasures of silver were nothing to be compared with the treasures of gold which he now saw before him. It was very fresh in his mind how hard it had been to reach the silver, and he was ready to believe that it must be even harder to get to the gold. But as long as he was seeking his fortune it would be cowardly of him not to try to win a great fortune if he could. The first thing was to find how to get over to the gold, for, between the spot where he and his little friend were standing and the heaps of golden treasure, was a wide opening, out of which black smoke and red fire kept curling, and it was easy to see that no one could ever go through that.

The place was not any too light, and it was some time before the boys found the only way provided

to get over; that was a narrow plank, not wide enough to stand upon with both feet together. The plank bridge, if it may be called a bridge, had no railing and was set not so far above the smoke and fire that one could feel by any means safe in trusting himself upon it. His friend said he would not try it and, although Tommy induced him two or three times to come to the edge of the plank, when the little fellow smelled the smoke he grew very pale and insisted that he would rather return home with what he had. He begged Tommy to return with him, but our hero would not hear of such a thing. He would have liked a balancing-rod to carry across the plank, as he had seen performers do on tight ropes or wires, but, no such thing being at hand, he carefully divided the silver which he had, putting half of it in his pockets on one side and half in those on the other, hoping that thus arranged the balancing weight would help to keep him steady.

He then bade his friend good-bye and started across the plank which, in fact, was even narrower than it had looked. He tried to keep his eyes straight ahead and not to think of his danger, and had almost reached the other side when foolishly he

glanced down and was so frightened at what he saw that he lost his footing and fell. As he fell Tommy threw out his hands and managed to catch hold of the plank. His feet now hung directly down into the opening, and he felt as if he was being slowly burned alive by the fire, while the smoke filled his eyes and nose until he could hardly see or breathe.

Tommy's was too brave a spirit to give up even now, so he kept pulling himself along the plank by his hands; then a little cheer in the distance told him that his friend was still watching him and seemed to send him new courage. His strength grew less and less, however, his hands slipped more and more off the plank until at last he let go. He could not see exactly where he had been hanging, but supposed that when he let go it would be the last of him; so he shut his eyes as he dropped. But it was only for a little way that he fell, after all; he had really passed almost entirely across the opening before he had lost his hold, and quite past the fire; so now he had only to clamber up the brink and he was safe. He waved his hand to his friend on the other side but, remembering his own peril, did not

think it right to urge him to follow; he silently watched the little fellow turn around and go back through the door well satisfied with whatever treasures of silver he had gained.

The stores of gold which Tommy saw ready for his hand were more wonderful than he had imagined. It did not take him long to empty his pockets of silver and fill them with the more precious metal. He knew that now he had fortune enough so that his father might have a better home, and his brothers and sisters be clothed and comfortable, and that they might all have as much as they wanted to eat all their lives. He was well pleased that he had not been satisfied with the silver, and could hardly be blamed for being a little proud.

Looking about, he saw a few boys, who, like himself, had passed over the narrow plank, some of whom were resting after their efforts, while others were passing out to the right and left. Several of them gathered around him and told him how they came over the thorns and stepping-stones to the silver treasure, and afterward made the difficult passage of the narrow plank to the stores of gold. Some said they had come over the plank without even

once losing their balance; others had fallen, and been saved by companions; others had come in pairs, and helped each other all the way; still others had tried two or three times, and gone back afraid, before they made the final passage. They also told him of other boys who had tried to make the passage and had fallen into the fire beneath never to be seen again.

Then one of them asked him: "Are you going to try for the jewels or are you satisfied?"

Tommy said: "I ought to be satisfied; but tell me where are the jewels?"

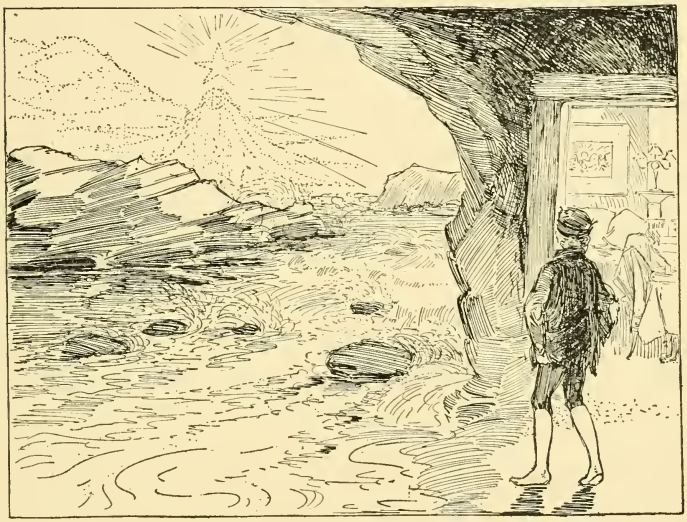
And the boy said: "Just beyond are the jewels. Fill your pockets with this gold,—it may last a few years; but load them with the jewels beyond and you will be rich all your life."

So Tommy, instead of passing out at either of the side doors, as most of the boys were doing, opened the door straight ahead. Heaps of what he was told were diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires lay sparkling and flashing in the distance. But between him and the precious store of jewels ran an angry river, boiling high, full of rocks, and looking very dangerous. He had never learned to swim but he thought

that even good swimmers would not like to venture into such a stream. Besides, poor little Tommy felt very tired. He had been through great trials since he had left home, so long ago it seemed, and it was very unpleasant, after all he had undergone, to think of attempting new dangers, worse, even, than those that had gone before. The more he thought of it, the more it seemed to him that he would do well to content himself with the gold which he had won.

As he cast his eyes about he saw to his right an outlet; perhaps here was an easier route to the jewels than that across the black river. He found it led into a delightful room. Bright pictures hung on the walls; on the floor was a thick carpet; the room was softly lighted from hanging lamps, and easy chairs, which looked very tempting to him, were placed conveniently about. He noticed on a rack in a corner a suit of boy's clothes marked with his name. There was a beautiful blue cap with a long ostrich feather, a velvet suit, high stockings of silk, and a pair of shoes. It did not take Tommy long to throw off the soiled and ragged clothes he wore and put on the new ones.

Now, forgetting all about the jewels, he passed out into another room larger than the first; in the centre of this room was set a table where a dinner, smoking hot, was waiting for him. Like most boys, Tommy



A Pleasant Room to Rest.

always had an appetite, but he had endured enough to make him even more hungry than usual, and the meal which he found awaiting him was even better than that he had so much enjoyed with the romping children earlier that long and trying night.

As he finished eating he began to hear sweet music

which made him think of sleep, and in the next room he found such a bed as he had never seen before, — so soft that when he put his weight on it, he sank far down, — the linen as white as snow, and the most tempting pillows for him to lay his head upon. Tommy's eyes were heavy with sleep, and he felt that he had done all the work which could fairly be asked of any little boy, and had honestly earned a right to rest.

But it happened, never having seen a real bed before, his own sleeping-place at home being a heap of straw in a corner of the room, that he was curious to examine this bed before getting into it; he handled the silk quilt, felt the fine linen sheets, pressed the soft feather pillows and at last went down on his hands and knees to look underneath. What was his astonishment to find a keg of powder placed directly under the spot where he would have lain, and, running from the powder a long fuse, the end of which was already burning! Tommy saw that the fuse would soon burn to the powder, and the powder would then explode; so, if he had indeed crept into the bed and gone to sleep, there would have been a speedy end of his fortune.

Then it came to him that he had not left his home to sleep, or enjoy music, or eat delicious dinners, but in search of his fortune; and he rushed to get out of the beautiful room far more eagerly than he had come into it. But it had been much easier to come in than it was to go out. His feet now seemed glued to the floor, and his legs almost refused to move; as he passed through doors it seemed as if hands which he could not see caught hold of him and tried to draw him back. But when he finally had passed out and once more saw the black river and the jewels in clear sight, Tommy pushed hurriedly forward to the very water's edge, although the nearer he came to it, the blacker and more fearful the river looked.

While he stood there he saw three boys rush into the river and try to swim across; and they were either drawn under by the black waters and were seen no more, or else were driven back. But, as he walked along the shore and looked carefully about, he saw a number of boats of all kinds; some were large and pleasant, and looked safe; others were very slight, and looked as if they would break to pieces from the mere force of the waves. Going to

one of the larger boats, he found it would cost a great deal of money to ride in it; and when he took out all the gold in his pockets and offered it to the boatman the fellow shook his head. So Tommy finally had to take up with one of the smaller boats, and even for that the greedy boatman demanded all of the boy's gold as fare.

Then the boat started upon its passage. If the water had looked black and dangerous from the shore it was far worse in the passage. The waves rose very high and often broke into the boat and the water must be constantly dipped out in bailing pans. Big rocks stuck their noses out from the water every few feet, and once in a while the boat would strike one of them and seem likely to break to pieces before it could be pushed off. He saw other boats which were trying the passage capsize and send to the bottom everybody on board. Sometimes his boatman would row fast and seem to make good headway; at other times the waves were so strong and high that the boat went backward instead of forward. Now Tommy was only anxious to save his life. He would perhaps have turned about and gone back but the boatman told him that would be most dangerous of all.

Across the River at Last.

At last they came almost to the shore, and the waters began to be more quiet, while the boatman rowed more easily, when suddenly another boat came tearing down toward them, driven by the swift current, and, striking theirs on the side, threw Tommy out into the water. He went down, down, down, until he thought he should never come up again; but, holding his breath, like the wise boy that he was, he soon rose to the surface of the water. Then he struck out with his arms and found that he did not sink again; his feet touched bottom, and he climbed up on the shore.

Tommy lay down for a few minutes, just out of the reach of the waves, almost forgetting there was such a thing as a jewel within reach. When by and by his strength came back to him he looked about. There were only two little fellows near. Few, indeed, who attempted to cross that stream were successful. He felt so sad then, as he saw the other boys come to grief while trying to make the terrible passage, that now the emeralds, diamonds, rubies, and sapphires hardly seemed worth the taking.

But Tommy wearily filled his pockets with the wonderful sparkling stones and, his new clothes

having numerous pockets, he was able to stow about him enough to buy a whole county if he should want one. Then, without even looking back again at the angry black river, he walked slowly to the nearest door in sight.

He tried three times, so tired was he, before he succeeded in opening the door, and then it was so dark that at first he could make out nothing. When he had shut the door behind him, however, he found himself not, as he had expected, far away from home, but again just outside of the oak-tree where the sick man had left him, and the bell, which, as he recalled, was beginning to strike for twelve o'clock when he went into the tree, was now just finishing its strokes as he came out. Feeling behind him on the tree, Tommy found only the rough bark, — nothing like a door anywhere. He thought surely he must have been dreaming, until, putting his hands in his pockets, he felt the gems.

It took him but a few minutes to reach his home, the door of which was never locked, since there was nothing worth stealing in that house; then, without even wakening his mother, he threw himself for the

last time on his own little pile of straw in the corner and went to sleep.

Tommy knew no more until the bright light of day came streaming into the room, when, hearing voices about him, he opened his eyes and saw his father and mother, his two brothers and his three sisters, all gathered around and staring at him.

"What is the matter?" he cried forgetting for the moment all that had happened to him during the last night.

"What is the matter?" repeated his father, but in a stern voice as if he feared his son had done something very wrong. "Where did you get those clothes you are wearing?"

The boy glanced down at his velvet coat and silk stockings and his beautiful shoes, and at his cap with the feather in it that lay beside him, and then he remembered.

"I will tell you;" he said, "but first let mother tell what she knows about the beginning of it."

After his mother had told her part of the story, Tommy told his and, when he had finished, he emptied his pockets of all the rare and costly jewels.

So that family was not poor any more, but had the best of the good things which there are in the world; and all because Tommy was a good, brave and true little boy.

STORY OF THE MAGIC MIRROR

MR. THOMPSON was a very rich man. He had horses and carriages, servants by the dozen, and he owned whole acres of beautiful groves and green meadows.

Everything had gone well with him, except that, for many years, he had had no child. Often he and his wife had said they would gladly exchange all their wealth for one little baby. And at last on a Christmas Eve a baby girl was given to them. Mr. Thompson was sitting in his library when the good news was brought, and he felt the happiest man in the whole world. He pictured to himself the pleasures he would give that little girl, the trips all over the world, the love and care such as no other child had. Already he imagined her climbing into his lap, patting his cheeks, saying what a kind, good father he was, and asking him for everything which money could buy. If she cried for the moon he would certainly do his best to get it for her. But just then

there came a tap at his door, and in response to his "Come in" a maid entered.

"An old woman wants to see you," she said, "and we cannot put her off."

"What is her name?" he asked.

"She would not give any name. She said she had brought something for the baby."

"Something for the baby? What kind of woman does she seem to be?"

"Oh, she is not a nice-looking woman at all, sir;" answered the maid. "Her clothes are very old and faded, and she wears the funniest bonnet, sir, you ever saw."

"What can she have for my little baby, and so soon?" exclaimed Mr. Thompson. "Oh, send her away."

Then the father returned to his dreams about the wonderful new baby that was given to him, and how happy he would make her, keeping away all the sorrow and trouble in the world. Now there came another tap at his door and the maid stood again on the threshold.

"She won't go away, sir. She says you will have reason to be very sorry if you don't see her."

Any other night than this Mr. Thompson would not have thought for a moment of letting the beggar woman,—for such he thought she was,—come into his library, but now he smiled and said: "Well, let her come in;" and felt in his pocket for loose change supposing that the old woman was coming after money. Then the door opened again and a funny little old woman entered; she wore a queer old-fashioned bonnet, heavy shoes on her feet which made a clacking noise as she walked, and a faded shawl pinned about her shoulders. The maid waited curiously at the door until her master said: "You may go, Mary." Then turning to the old woman he invited her to sit down.

"Now, what is it you want?"

"I just want to make you a present, Mr. Thompson."

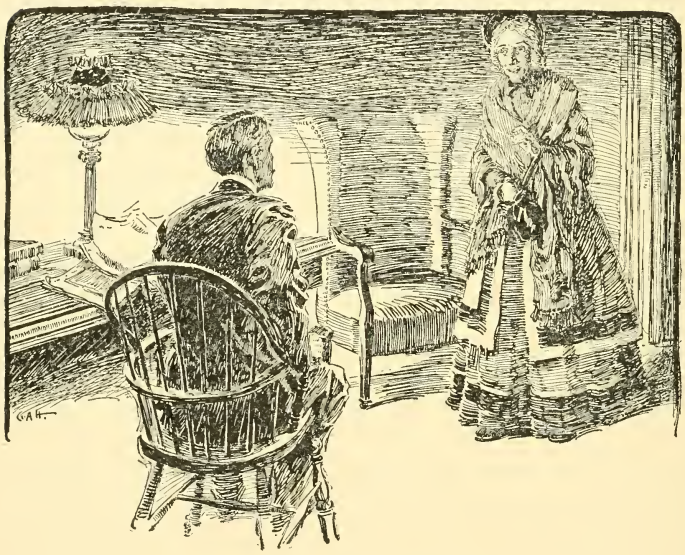
And then he smiled. "You are sure you don't want to have me make you one?"

"Very sure indeed;" and she laughed a dry cackling laugh. "But, really, my gift is not so much for you as for the little one."

"A present for my baby so soon!" he exclaimed.

"It isn't much to look at;" said the old woman.

"Indeed, you may laugh when you see it." And, fumbling in her pocket, she drew forth a piece of looking-glass which she laid on the desk. "This is the present."



THE GIFT OF THE MAGIC MIRROR.

Mr. Thompson thought his strange caller must surely be out of her wits, but he could not be harsh to any one that night, so he thought to joke with her a little. "Why, the baby would cut herself with that;" he said, as he handled the piece of glass. "We have

enough mirrors in the house which we could break up to make such little bits as this if we chose to give her a chance to cut her fingers."

The old woman cackled again. "But you have no mirror like this in your house;" she said. "This is magic looking-glass, made many, many years ago, before all the great secrets had been forgotten; it is now the only piece of the kind in the whole world."

"Why, it looks like any other looking-glass," said Mr. Thompson, "except that it is more stained."

"This is no joke, sir," she answered, "and I am not the half-witted creature that you think. Your little girl you mean to surround with constant care and devotion. But greater dangers threaten her than you can imagine, and this broken piece of looking-glass which I bring to you will be her only safe-guard against them."

Then Mr. Thompson grew serious. "But why do you bring it to me?"

Then the old woman said: "Can you remember far back to your boyhood,—when you were but twelve years old? Walking along on the street of this very village you came upon a crowd of rough boys who were throwing snowballs at an

old woman making her way quietly along the street. You drove the tormentors away and said a kind word to her. Do I look anything like that old woman?"

Then Mr. Thompson recalled that long-distant day, and even the color of the shawl and the clacking shoes which the woman wore. "Why, you are the very woman!" he cried.

"Yes, yes!" cackled she, "and I never forget favors. So, when your little girl grows to be twelve years old I want you to give her this glass, which if she uses it aright will prove a blessing to her and to you."

"But what can the glass do for her?" asked Mr. Thompson.

"As I told you this is a Magic Mirror;" she answered. "If she turns it so as to reflect the faces of those near at hand it will show what they really are instead of what they seem to be."

"How?" he asked, with more interest.

"If she turns it," explained the woman, "so as to reflect a face, it will show, not the usual face of that person as another mirror would do, but the face of the animal which he or she most resembles. If the animal

is a bad and treacherous one, then your daughter may know that the person is bad and treacherous like the animal. If the animal whose face is reflected from the glass is a noble and faithful one, she may know that the person is noble and faithful."

"Why, this is very strange!" he cried. "How can I believe you?"

"You might try it;" she answered, and he reached eagerly forward to take it from the table. "But wait a moment. You see the mirror is very much stained and discolored. It has been used thousands of times since the ancient days of the world, and can be used to reflect faces but six times more. When it has given six more magic reflections it will become so stained as to be of no further service. If you wish to waste one of the chances, call in a servant and see what kind of animal it is that he or she most resembles; but I advise you to leave your little daughter all six for her own benefit. That will be better than to waste even one of them merely to satisfy your own curiosity."

"It all sounds like a fairy story of long ago;" said Mr. Thompson.

"Yes, I know it must sound strange to you;" she

answered, "but it can do your little daughter no harm to give her the mirror when she is twelve years old, and to tell her what I have told you. Even if the mirror fails to show any magic power, she will be no worse off than if she never had had it."

"That is true," said Mr. Thompson, "and I thank you."

Then the old woman rose to her feet. "Do not forget that serious dangers threaten your little daughter, and be very sure to give the mirror to her on the morning of her twelfth birthday."

Mr. Thompson stepped to the door and pushed a button to call a maid to show the old woman out, and in a few moments he again sat alone in his library, with the mirror laid face downward in the drawer of his desk. Now he was thinking of the strange tale which had been told him, and anxiety had taken the place of bright hopefulness for his little daughter's future.

Little Hilda Thompson grew to be a beautiful and noble girl. Every one loved her. Her father had long since forgotten about the mirror, not having even told his wife of it and not supposing for a

moment that any danger could ever threaten his carefully guarded child.

But it so happened, on the very morning of her twelfth birthday, that Mr. Thompson had occasion to go to his library desk and thoroughly examine all the papers inside of it. In the back of one of the drawers, covered with dust, he found lying face downward a broken piece of glass, and for a moment he could not think how it came there. Then the scene of that evening, twelve years before, when the little old woman had come to him with her strange tale, returned to his memory, and his heart grew heavy as he remembered that it was now, as she had said, that the dangers were to begin for his precious child. If the woman was not a false prophet he had come upon the mirror in the very nick of time.

Mr. Thompson at once sent for his daughter, meanwhile wrapping the mirror carefully in a velvet cover. Very soon he heard the bounding steps of his child along the hall; the door burst open, and she sprang to her favorite place upon his knee.

"What is it, papa? What makes you look so sober, dear?"

"I have a little story to tell you, my darling;"

answered her father, stroking her head and looking sadly into her large blue eyes.

"Is it a sad story, papa, that you look so?"

"You may judge for yourself;" he answered. "Twelve years ago,—the very night that you were born, my dear,—as I was sitting in this room, a queer-looking little old woman came in to me and left what she said was a Magic Mirror. She told me that it was to be given to you when you were just twelve years old, and that if used aright it would protect you from danger. It is the thought of possible danger for you which makes me sad to-day. The mirror, she said, could be used but six times before it would become so badly stained as to give back no more reflections; so you must be very careful, my darling, how you use it. It will show the real character of people, so the old woman said. Whether a person is good and true, or bad and false, the reflection in the mirror will be that of the animal which he or she is most like at heart."

"Oh, where is it, papa? Where is it?" Hilda cried. "I want to try it." And her eyes danced with glee.

"No, no;" he said. "Remember I tell you it can be used but six times; you must not waste its magic power for mere fun or idle curiosity, but use it only when you are very sure that it is necessary. If the mirror can do what was claimed for it it will, indeed, protect you from great dangers, for people are not always what they seem."

Then he took the Magic Mirror, wrapped in velvet, from the top of the desk. "It has lain face downward in one of the drawers of my desk for twelve years, my dear, and I have just wrapped it in velvet so that by no chance its virtue may be spoiled by accident."

So he put her down from his lap and handed her the broken piece of looking-glass in its velvet covering.

It was only a few moments after his daughter had run out of the library, and straight to her dainty chamber to put away her curious treasure, that a message came to Mr. Thompson telling of the death of his brother in a town not far away and calling him and his wife to come at once. But the message explained that a child in the house had scarlet fever, so it would not be best for them to

bring Hilda with them. Mr. Thompson was very much astonished to receive such a message, as he had not heard that his brother had been even sick. But there was not a moment to lose if he was to catch the train, so, hastily breaking the sad news to his wife, he ordered the carriage and they both prepared to set out for the station.

There seemed no danger in leaving Hilda since the governess, who loved the child only less than did her parents, would be with her. Still, Hilda had never been separated from her father and mother, even for a single day and, as now she watched them drive away, tears ran down her cheeks.

The whistle of the train which was to take her father and mother on their sad journey had not yet sounded when another message came to the house; this message was for the governess, telling her that her sister in the village below had been taken very seriously sick.

"I shall be back soon, my dear child;" she said. "Don't on any account step out of the house while I am gone."

With many friends still close at hand, Hilda was not afraid and, going into her own little room, the

windows of which opened to the front of the house, she took up her favorite book of fairy tales and began to read.

Then, all of a sudden, from her window she saw great clouds of smoke rising from the roof of the stables which lay to the north of the house, and flames darting out of the windows. She loved the horses and was very much disturbed at their danger; so, calling to the butler and to all the servants she told them to make haste and rush down to the stables and give what help they could. Thus, strangely enough, it happened that, within a very few minutes of the time when her father and mother had kissed her good-bye on the front door-step, Hilda was sitting alone in her own little room at the front of the great house without a friend or even a companion to call upon in case of need.

Now she heard the rumbling of a carriage on the driveway. The carriage stopped at the front door, and a man, alighting, rang the bell. For a moment the child forgot that there was no one in the house but herself and waited for some one to answer the door-bell. But soon the bell rang again, louder and longer than before, and suddenly remembering,

with a quick sinking of heart, that there was no maid in the house to answer the bell, Hilda threw open a window, leaned out and called to the man below.

"What is it?"

"Let me in and I will tell you;" he answered.

"Why, there is no one in the house but me;" she said. "What do you want?"

"I can't talk here;" said the man, looking up at her. "Please come to the door."

"You can tell me from there;" she insisted.

"The train with your father and mother on it has run off the track," he called up to her, "and your father is badly hurt. Your mother sent me to bring you to him."

"Oh, that is terrible!" cried Hilda.

"Come at once;" said the man. "There is no time to lose."

Then she thought of the Magic Mirror which her father had given to her that very morning, — her dear father who, she was told, was now so badly hurt. This was surely the time to test its power; she would turn it toward this stranger and see whether he were a good or a bad man. She rushed

to her little bureau and, taking the piece of glass still safe in its velvet case from the drawer where she had laid it away only a little while before, she was back in an instant. Then, leaning far out of the window, she called to the stranger below.

"I am afraid to come down."

Now the man stood out farther on the porch and turned his face plainly up to her. "Why are you afraid?" he asked. "I only came for you because your mother sent me." He had a smooth voice, was well dressed, and carried a handsome cane in his hand. Certainly no messenger could have been more respectable. But, drawing the broken piece of looking-glass from the velvet, Hilda held it so as to show his face and looked carefully for the reflection in the glass. The child was so frightened at what she saw in the Magic Mirror that she almost dropped the glass to the ground below; instead of the face of a tall and handsome man, as he had looked, with the dress and manners of a gentleman, the mirror showed a shaggy wolf on all fours, with fierce, bloodshot eyes, and open mouth exposing long, sharp teeth.

"What is that in your hand?" he asked. But

Hilda did not stay to answer. Drawing back quickly she stood, fairly dancing, in her excitement, on the floor, while she tried to decide what she should do next. She knew now that this was a bad, false man, and it occurred to her that it had been all a part of his plan to call her father and mother away, to send for her governess, and even to set fire to the stables, so that she should be left quite alone. No doubt he thought that it would now be very easy to steal her away.

But what to do next? The smoke from the stables was still rising black in the air, and she could see no one coming toward the house from any direction. Then she recollected that, when the house was built, her father had put a bell in the tower, the bell-rope hanging down in one of the upper rooms. He had said the bell was to be rung in case of fire or serious trouble so as to let the village below know that help was required. It only took her a minute to spring up the stairs and to burst into the room where the rope hung. Then, grasping the rope in both hands, she pulled with all her might. The bell was a large one and gave out a sound that could be heard for a mile at least. Hilda was not content to

ring it once but pulled the rope again and again until she was almost deafened by the sound. Now she stole softly into another room and, peeping out through the blinds, saw the stranger run rapidly down the steps and leap into the carriage; then the driver whipped his horses until they fairly galloped toward the gate.

It was only a few minutes more before help enough and to spare was at hand.

Shortly afterward the governess came back from the village and said that her sister had not been sick at all and could not understand how such a story had been sent. The governess had hardly finished her tale when Hilda's father and mother returned. It seemed that they had met the brother, who they had been told was dead, at the station, and he was as well as ever. Then Hilda told her story, and her father understood it all: some wicked men had planned, by one trick and another, to get everybody else away from the house so that the child should be left alone; they hoped then to be able to steal her away, knowing that Mr. Thompson would be eager to give all he had in the world if he could only get her safe back again.

Very kind words were said that night of the old woman who twelve years before had surprised Mr. Thompson with her call. The Magic Mirror had, indeed, been given into Hilda's hand on the very morning when the first real need for it came.

After that Mr. Thompson was more careful than ever of his daughter, giving positive orders that she should never be left alone. But the weeks and the months went by and no other danger seemed to threaten her.

Hilda, however, always kept the Magic Mirror about her in a little bag which she wore when she went to walk and to drive, to school, and on all her journeys; every night, when she went to bed, she placed the bag containing her precious piece of broken looking-glass on a stand within easy reach.

It was nearly a year after her twelfth birthday that Hilda, with her father and mother, was spending the summer at the seashore. The time had passed very delightfully with driving, bathing, and the sail-boat trips which they took almost every pleasant day. But Hilda thought the best of all would be the afternoon when the whole family set sail for a picnic on a little island a mile from the hotel.

The picnic lunch took place under some trees, a little way back from the beach. The dining-table was a big flat rock, decorated with the wild flowers which Hilda and her father had been gathering while her mother with the maid was spreading the cloth and laying out fruits and dainties.

But no sooner had they eaten the delicious lunch than Mr. Thompson began to look anxiously at the sky which was rapidly clouding over. Then the wind began to rise and to grow stronger every minute. He hastily arose and ran along the beach looking for the boat which had brought them over to the island; it was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps its owner had not thought they would wish to return so soon. Two other skippers, however, offered to take them home, each one claiming that his boat was safe, and insisting that the other's was dangerous. Mr. Thompson did not know either of the men and could not guess which was more worthy of trust. But the water between the island and the mainland which had been so smooth a little while ago was now white with tossing waves rising higher from minute to minute.

There was no time to waste if they were to get

safely across, and as to spending the night on the little island without any protection from the coming rain, that was not to be thought of. Mrs. Thompson liked the skipper with the smooth face and the pleasant smile the better of the two, and Mr. Thompson himself thought his boat looked neater and more trim than the other.

"Better hurry, sir;" urged the fellow, who began to look nervously at the sky and sea. "Even now it will be risky to cross."

They were all following him to his boat when Hilda thought of her Magic Mirror. It might even now save all their lives by showing which skipper to trust with their lives. Perhaps the smooth-looking man was not capable; she opened her bag to take out the mirror and put him to the test.

"Hurry, my dear;" urged her father. "There is not a minute to lose." But Hilda had now drawn out her looking-glass, stripped back the velvet cover, and was holding it so as to reflect the face of the polite skipper. The waves tossed higher than ever and the wind almost tore the mirror from the child's hand. Mr. Thompson turned pale as he saw the fellow reflected in the magic glass as a fool-

ish, grinning monkey. In a minute more they were all in the other boat and it was bravely breasting the waves which threatened to sink it. But the

Choosing the Boatman.

second boatman was skilful and soon brought them safely to the shore. Just as they were stepping out, with lightened hearts, they heard a loud shout from their friends who had gathered anxiously at the dock

to await them. Looking back they saw the other boat, which they would have taken but for the Magic Mirror, capsize as it was struck by a big wave, and throw its owner into the sea; he was able to swim ashore, after a hard struggle for his life, but it was easy to see what would have happened to Hilda, her father and mother, and the faithful maid, if they had been with him.

Hilda had one very dear friend; Jennie lived near by, and each girl was at the other's house almost as much as at her own; they went to school and returned arm in arm, and neither was content until she had told the other the little which had time to happen between their frequent meetings. It so happened that a cousin of Hilda's came on a visit and, being of a jealous disposition, she was made unhappy by seeing how fond Hilda was of Jennie. She began to throw out spiteful hints against Jennie; she would try to make Hilda think her friend was talking unkindly of her or laughing at her, or that she was getting to like another schoolmate and to neglect Hilda, and, most shocking of all, that she told to the other girl the choicest secrets which Hilda had confided in her.

The jealous cousin usually did all this in whispers, leaning over Hilda's shoulder to breathe the mischief into her ears, and very often when Jennie was present so that the poison would work two ways: — Jennie would think Hilda and her cousin were talking against her, or making plans which left her out; —then Jennie would be less affectionate, and Hilda would, of course, think this went to show that her cousin was right in warning her against her old friend, and would then be cold to Jennie, which would lead matters from bad to worse.

So the beautiful friendship between the two girls seemed likely to be killed, instead of ripening with each year to give them both joy and comfort all their lives. Hilda felt very miserable, until one day she thought of her Magic Mirror. Why not try this whispering cousin and see whether her bitter words were honest? Hilda did not wait a minute after the thought came to her. Her bag, which these years always hung by her side, was torn open with eager fingers, and she quickly drew out the piece of looking-glass wrapped in its velvet cover. Several of her friends were with her that afternoon, all having come back from school together. Jennie,

hurt by the cold looks of her dearest friend, was talking listlessly with another girl at one end of the room, and the jealous cousin was leaning over Hilda's shoulder from behind saying, in a whisper, that Jennie was making fun of a mistake in Hilda's recitation that morning at school. Poor Hilda's heart was sore and she was just darting a very unkind glance at Jennie when the thought of the Magic Mirror came to her. Now she suddenly raised the glass so as to reflect her cousin's face as that of an evil-looking cat spitting its poison into her ear.

It was all done so quickly that the cousin did not know what was going on; but she was astonished, you may believe, when Hilda impatiently stepped away from her saying: "I don't believe a word you say against my best friend."

But Jennie knew about the magic mirror and had seen what Hilda was doing with it. So she was ready with wide open arms to take her friend back to her heart when Hilda rushed across the room to her like a small whirlwind of muslin and smiles.

Hilda's next great danger was of a very different kind. There was a new scholar in her school who kept saying flattering things to the girl. One day

she would tell Hilda she was very pretty,—her hair was so long and thick, her eyes were so large and soft, her lips so sweet. The next day the child was told how graceful she was, how well she walked and stood, how very kind-hearted she was,—much better to all her mates than they deserved or than they were to her. Another day her friend told her how bright she was,—the quickest of scholars, learning her lessons without half trying. So, as was only natural, the child came to talk too much of herself, and was in a fair way of being spoiled.

Mr. Thompson was very unhappy over the course things seemed to be taking, being afraid that his daughter would grow up a vain, silly, and useless woman. But it was all for nothing that he tried his best to show her the mistake she was making in listening to all the flattering words she might hear, until one lucky morning he bethought himself of the Magic Mirror.

"You always take the Magic Mirror to school, I suppose;" he said.

"Yes, papa. But why do you speak of it?"

"Well, my dear," he replied, "you do not seem quite to believe me when I tell you that people who

praise us do not always mean what they say. Why not put this admirer of yours to the test?"

"What do you mean, papa?" asked Hilda, making ready to set out for school.

"Why, just this. The next time your new admirer begins to tell you how lovely or bright or good you are, hold up your Magic Mirror so as to reflect her face in it. So you will learn whether she is as honest as she is pleasing to listen to."

Hilda was sure that nobody could praise her without being good and true and was very willing to put her friend to the test.

"I'll do it;" she answered gayly, as she ran off to school.

But when she came home at noon she was crying bitterly.

"What is the matter?" asked her father tenderly, as he took her in his arms.

So, between her sobs, Hilda told him how she had turned the Magic Mirror on the friend who had done nothing but praise her; "and, what do you think? (sob), I saw her reflected in the mirror as a fox. You remember the fable — (sob), about the fox that wanted the piece of cheese which the bird had in her

mouth, (sob)? The bird was perched on the branch of a tree, and the fox was on the ground below looking up hungrily. You know the picture?"

"Yes," answered her father, hugging her a little closer, "and I have seen so many such foxes and foolish birds!"

"Then you remember that the cunning fox told the bird how sweet a voice she had,— she was really a hoarse, cracked-voiced old crow, — and the silly thing opened her mouth to sing and dropped the cheese for the sly fox. Well—(sob), my friend, whom I had thought so nice, looked in the mirror just like that fox." And Hilda, who had just learned the most painful and perhaps the most useful lesson of her life, nestled her head against her father's loving shoulder and cried as if her heart would break.

Soon afterward colder weather came, and ice formed on the pond near Hilda's home, although in some places it was thin. One of her foolish playmates persuaded her to skate upon a dangerous place. If Hilda had tried her Magic Mirror she would not have taken the risk. Perhaps she was out of patience with it since her last painful lesson, yet I really suppose she chose to save her last two chances

for occasions she thought more important and where her common sense could not guide her. But the ice broke beneath her weight and she came near being drowned. As it was, she caught a severe cold, and in a few days a dreadful disease set in and it was feared the child would not get well.

Her mother hardly left the sick-room, and her father spent his days and nights waiting outside the door, afraid to look in the faces of those who came out lest he should read there the worst of news.

At last the old family doctor said he could do nothing more for the sick child, and two famous doctors were called from far away. The doctors had heard of each other but had never met until in Hilda's sick-room. They were very different in appearance. One was tall and fat, with a full, ruddy face; when he talked he puffed out his cheeks, and, as he stood or walked about, his body bent forward in the middle like a bow; certainly he looked much more important than the small, thin doctor with the pale face and the stoop in his narrow shoulders.

The two doctors looked carefully at the sick child

and, when it came to talking over her case, did not think it necessary to go out, since she seemed too weak to notice what was said or done. Each had a treatment to suggest which he thought would save her, and each was sure that what was suggested by the other would do more harm than good. After disputing for a few minutes they called Mr. Thompson from his anxious seat just outside the door to decide between them; he did not hesitate a moment, the fat, red-faced doctor looked so much wiser than the small doctor with the pale cheeks and the stooping shoulders.

"Well," said the small, pale doctor, taking up his hat to go, "then you have no more use for me. When you lose your child you will know whom to blame."

Just then Hilda opened her eyes and seemed trying to speak. Her mother was bending over her in an instant to catch the feeble whisper, and then turned quickly to her husband.

"She wants the Magic Mirror;" explained Hilda's mother, hurriedly taking the glass in its wrappings from the bag which lay on the stand; then she stripped back the velvet which protected its

surface, and Hilda took it. The big, red-faced doctor, curious to know what was going on, had drawn near while the thin white hands held up toward him the stained piece of broken looking-glass.

To Mr. Thompson's astonishment the important-appearing gentleman was reflected in the Magic Mirror as a stupid donkey hardly any taller than a Shetland pony.

The effort exhausted the child's strength and she sank back and closed her eyes again. But the Magic Mirror had done its wonderful work once more. The wise-looking doctor was sent away, and the other stayed to care for the sick child soon to be restored to perfect health.

When Hilda had grown quite well again her parents took her far away to a foreign land. There they stayed until she had grown to be a woman. But hardly a day passed that they did not speak of the good the Magic Mirror had done and think gratefully of the old woman who had made Hilda the gift.

When Hilda returned to her home she had reached the age when she began to think of getting married. The house was gay with parties

and dances, and young men came from far and near to try to win her for a bride. Some loved her for her beauty, others for her sweetness; others pretended to love her but it was only for the sake of the riches which would be hers. No girl in the land had more real or pretended lovers.

Among them all there were two, at the last, between whom she was to choose. Both were handsome, both were pleasing in manner; yet they were quite different, one having black hair and flashing black eyes, while the other had brown hair and blue eyes. The black-eyed man was the handsomer, and most of her friends thought she preferred him. Both had asked her hand in marriage, and the time had come, on the evening when her twenty-first birthday party filled the grand house with gay guests, that she was to give her answer. The hours were passing merrily away, and she seemed to be no nearer making up her mind, when suddenly a new idea came to her. Hastily leading her parents to one side, into the very library where her father had sat the night she was born, she exclaimed: —

"Have you forgotten all about the Magic Mirror?"

"Indeed, no!" answered her father. "How could we ever forget the dangers from which that broken piece of looking-glass saved our darling child?"

"Then you must remember it has been used but five times, and is good for once more. Perhaps it may save me from an even greater danger now. Why not try my two lovers with it and see which is the truer and better man?"

"Why not, indeed?" echoed her mother eagerly. "Run and get the mirror and your father will call them into this room for the test."

When Hilda returned with the mirror in the little bag where she had always kept it, she found the two young men waiting in wonder as to what it could all mean. Mr. Thompson merely said: "Here is a curiosity. It is a strange sort of mirror which my daughter would like you to look into."

Still wondering, the two men took their places on either side of her; then, as she held up the stained piece of looking-glass, all three looked into it. The Magic Mirror was still not so badly stained as to fail in its last task: Hilda was reflected as a lamb, the blue-eyed lover as a magnificent lion, the king

of all animals, and the other young man as a skulking and cowardly jackal watching the lamb with a hungry look but trembling with fear of her protector, the noble lion.

This decided it. Mr. Thompson, with tears of happiness in his eyes, placed the hand of his daughter

One Way of choosing a Husband.

in that of the young man who had stood the test so well. Then they returned to the drawing-room, and, in the presence of the great company, it was announced that Hilda had chosen for her husband the

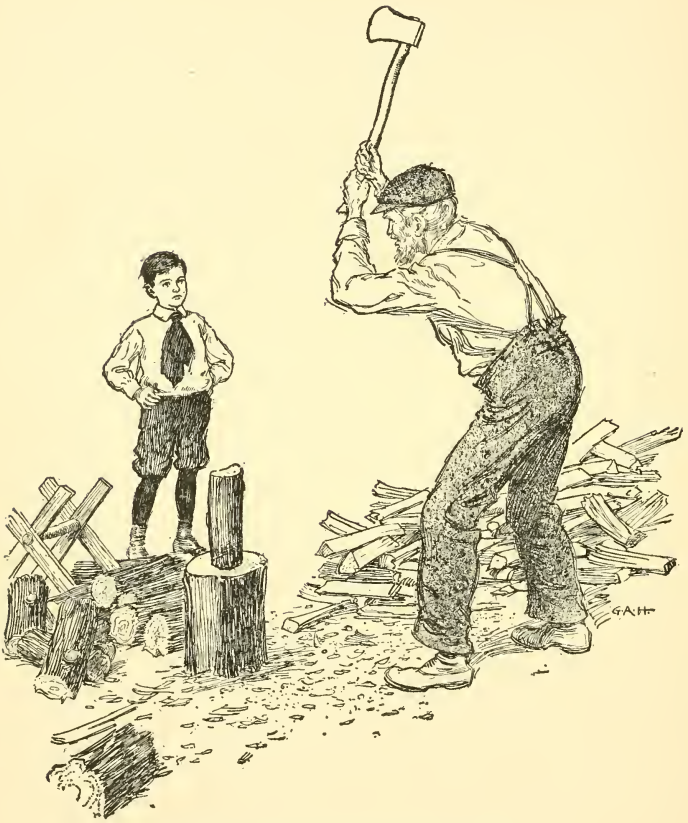
man whom her parents were content to intrust with her life's happiness.

Her wedding was the grandest ever known in that country, and she lived happily ever after.

STORY OF THE BOY WHO TEASED

RALPH LOGAN was a very bright boy, interested in everything that he saw and heard. When his father hired old Mr. Wilkins to saw some wood in the cellar, Ralph took his position on the cellar stairs and tormented the old man for an hour at a time, teasing to be permitted to try whether he could not saw just as well himself. Indeed, the boy only ceased teasing to saw when Mr. Wilkins stopped sawing and, taking up his axe, proceeded to split the lengths of wood into small pieces. Then Ralph forgot all about his anxiety to saw while he pleaded with Mr. Wilkins to let him have just one chance to use the axe.

Another day the coal men came, and, the wagon being halted in the street, a big grimy-faced man proceeded to bring the coal, in great baskets on his shoulder, to the cellar window, where he emptied them with a great rattle and roar. Ralph kept begging the grimy-faced man to let him carry one of the



RALPH WOULD LIKE TO SPLIT WOOD.

baskets on his shoulder, and, after being refused twenty times in twenty minutes, began to tease the other man, who stood on the cart with a shovel, to

let him shovel the coal into the baskets. The shoveller merely laughed at the boy. But when Hannah, the cook, told Ralph's father, on his return from business, how Ralph had behaved about the wood and coal Mr. Logan looked quite sober. He called his boy to him just before bedtime and told him it was very wrong to keep asking to be allowed to do things which he did not know how to do, and which he was too young to do even if he knew how.

"Why," said Ralph, "it looked so easy when Mr. Wilkins was sawing. All he had to do was to put his foot on the log and push his saw back and forth through the wood a few times; then a length of the log fell off showing the beautiful smooth place where the saw had been running."

"You are much mistaken;" said his father. "It is very hard work even for a grown man, who knows how, to saw wood. But if Mr. Wilkins had trusted you with his saw and had even done his best to show you how to use it, you would have found that the saw would keep going in every direction except the one you wanted it to take, bending out and in, and finally getting stuck so fast in the wood that he himself could not easily have worked it loose."

"Well," said Ralph, "anyhow I think I could have split the wood. The axe was so sharp that all Mr. Wilkins had to do was swing it over his head, and when he brought its edge down against the piece of wood it cut as a knife would slice a piece of cake."

"More likely," said his father, "it would have cut one of your feet off. An axe is a very dangerous thing for any one to handle unless he has been very carefully taught. But the axe Mr. Wilkins uses to split wood is so heavy that you could not have swung it. Hannah says you also wanted to have the coal-man put that big basket loaded with coal on your back and let you carry it to the cellar window. I could not have lifted it myself, and even if you had been able to carry the basket, it would not have been well for your clothes. Perhaps you did not notice the grimy face of the man whose business it is to carry coal baskets."

"Yes, father, I see you are right. But I think the other man might have let me get in the wagon and fill the baskets with that fine big shovel of his."

"That was pretty dirty work, too;" said his father. "It was a good deal harder, too, than it looked.

You could not have lifted that shovel of his when it was even one-quarter full. Now, my son, you are ten years old to-day, and your mother and I have given you all the things which a boy of your age can enjoy. I hope you will give up this foolish habit of yours of asking to be allowed to do things which you are too little and too young for." Then his father and mother kissed him good night and Ralph promised that he would try not to trouble them any more.

But it seemed as if sleep must have made him forget; for the very next morning, on his way to school with the boy who lived next door, he told his friend that he wished he could be motorman on the street car that went dashing by.

"It is easy enough;" said Ralph; "all he has to do is pull a handle around, and the farther he pulls it, the faster the car goes."

Ralph rode home from school that afternoon on the same street car, and lost no time before he made his way to the front platform and began to tease the motorman to let him run the car just a little way. Of course the motorman only laughed at him, and Ralph was quite out of temper when he reached home.

James, the coachman, was just riding off on one of the horses as Ralph entered the gate. "Where are you going, James?" asked the boy.

"I am giving the horses some exercise;" said James. "They have been shut up for two or three days and are too full of life to drive."

"Oh, James," shouted Ralph, "come back and put the saddle and bridle on Nellie and let me ride her."

"Nellie would throw you off, my boy," said James laughing, "you need longer legs than yours and a stronger hand before you can ride anything but a Shetland pony." Ralph quite lost his temper at this and ran crying into the house.

At bedtime he told all his troubles to his mother. She shook her head quite sadly as she bade him good night and said: "You promised, Ralph, that you would do your best to overcome your bad habit of teasing to do everything which you see grown people doing. You are making us all very unhappy and growing up to be an ill-tempered man. I only wish I knew how to cure you of your bad habit."

Now there was a certain fairy who had loved Ralph ever since he was born. She had often saved him from accident, or whispered some warning in his

ears in time to prevent his doing some very foolish thing. She, too, was very sad over Ralph's ill behavior, and ashamed because she felt that it might be partly her fault. She was sitting right by Mrs. Logan's elbow while Ralph's mother was bidding him good night, but, of course, grown people cannot see fairies, and usually even children cannot see them except in the night time. But when his mother went out of the room, leaving Ralph to go to sleep, the fairy stayed behind. Mrs. Logan was in the habit of locking Ralph's door when she went out, because, once or twice, the boy had risen from bed and walked in his sleep, and she was afraid he might come out some night, in his sleep, not knowing what he was doing, if the door was left unlocked, and tumble down-stairs.

It did not worry the fairy at all that the door was locked and she inside, because fairies can go right through closed doors, or stone walls for that matter, and take any little boys or girls with them, too, just by holding their hands. Ralph's fairy was still sitting on the window-seat in the little boy's room as troubled as any fairy can be. Her pretty red mouth was pursed up, and her eyebrows were drawn

down in a stern little frown, as she tried to study out Ralph's case. If the boy had not dropped off to sleep he could have seen her growing plainer to view every minute as the room grew darker and darker.

At last a bright thought seemed to cross the fairy's mind; she smiled as if now everything had become clear and, sliding off the window-seat, she alighted on Ralph's pillow and pinched one of his ears. He put up his hand and rubbed the ear quickly and then, turning over on the other side, went to sleep again. The fairy laughed with a sweet, tinkling noise and pinched his other ear; then spoke his name. Ralph quickly turned on his back and opened his eyes. She then spoke his name again, and the boy sat up in bed, turning sidewise to see who it was that spoke to him in such a queer little voice and yet so distinctly.

It was the first time Ralph had ever seen a fairy, but no boy of his age is really surprised when he sees a fairy for the first time, and no good boy is afraid. He just smiled and said: "You are a fairy;" and his eyes began to dance. He was quite sure there was a good time in store for him. "I had no idea fairies were so pretty;" he added.

You see, the fairy had a face like a dainty child, with a small mouth, large soft eyes and arched eyebrows; she wore a wise, gentle expression which young faces do not always keep. Her voice was as sweet as a happy child's, with something of the mother ring in it, too, so that not only did the boy love to hear it but it made him trust her.

He was too eager to hear what she would propose to think very much then as to how she was dressed and what jewellery she wore. But, as he tried to picture her afterward, it seemed to him that she had about her neck a string of great pearls which hung almost to her waist, each of the pearls seeming to have a light of its own so that it almost shone. She wore a belt or girdle of glistening stones which he thought perhaps might be diamonds, and her fluffy white dress was caught up in a hundred loops with golden buckles. She smiled gayly when Ralph spoke of her beauty; even the best of fairies have a little vanity; and I am not sure but she blushed just a little. Perhaps she was ashamed of her vanity.

"I suppose," exclaimed Ralph jumping out of bed without delay, "that you are going to take me off

with you for some great fun to-night. Wait a minute until I get on my clothes."

"What are you talking about, little boy?" she said laughing out mockingly. "Don't you see you are quite dressed now?" And, sure enough, as Ralph glanced at his feet, he saw that he already had on his shoes and stockings, his trousers and little jacket and even his collar and necktie; while under his very eyes he could see the air taking shape in his hand, and a moment later there was his cap clutched tightly between his thumb and two fingers.

"I am going to scold you a little, first;" said the fairy. "You are displeasing your father and mother and making all your friends uncomfortable by teasing to be allowed to do things which only grown-up people can properly do. You will not believe it when you are told that you do not know how to do the things, and that it would not be well for you to try."

"If they would only give me a chance!" said Ralph complainingly, his face falling, and all the brightness going out of his eyes, at the thought of the many thrilling pleasures which he had been denied.

"I am now going to give you a chance;" said the

fairy. "Try to think what of all things you would rather try to do, and you shall go and try to do it to-night."

"Really!" almost screamed the boy with delight. "Anything! I would rather, most of all," he shouted, "run an engine."

The words had hardly gone out of his mouth before the fairy leaned forward, took one of his hands in hers, and put her other hand, soft and warm as a baby's, over his eyes. Then there broke on his ears the deafening roar of iron wheels running on iron tracks, and he found himself sitting on the engineer's seat in the cab of a locomotive engine, and dressed in overalls and jumper instead of the clothes he had worn an instant before.

It was a bright moonlight night, so Ralph could see quite a distance on either side of the track and back where the long train of passenger cars came rushing after his engine. He could see a long way in front, too, by aid of the moonlight, even without the locomotive headlight, which threw its long white rays far out ahead on the track.

Of course there was also a fireman in the cab; he was, at that very moment, shovelling coal into the

fire-box of the engine. At first Ralph felt very uncomfortable and would much have preferred to be back in his own bed; the shaking of the great engine made his teeth fairly chatter, and the noise was louder than anything he had ever heard. But soon the swift motion and the flying glimpses of houses, fields, forests, and hillsides, brooks and ravines, ponds and waterfalls began to delight him.

Then he became aware that the fireman had closed the door of the fire-box almost at his feet, and was standing looking at him in surprise. No wonder he was surprised, thought Ralph, to see a little boy only ten years old sitting in the seat of the engineer of the Limited Express. The man's lips were moving, but so loud was the din of the machinery that it was quite a little time before Ralph could understand what he was saying.

It seemed that the fireman was not expressing his astonishment at finding such a youthful engineer in such an important position, but only reminding him that he had not whistled or rung his bell at the crossings. "What is the matter with you to-night, Jim? You passed three crossings without so much as a whistle or a jerk of your bell-cord. I never knew

you to do such a thing before." You see the fireman thought it was the regular engineer.

"I was only thinking;" piped up a childish voice entirely unlike Jim's although the fireman strangely enough did not appear to notice it. Ralph had often seen engineers pull forward a little handle for the whistle, but somehow he could not decide, now that he was actually in the cab, which one of the numerous rods, handles, and knobs he should pull or push; it might be a very serious affair, you see, if he touched the wrong one. The fireman quickly leaned forward and, laying his hand on a rod in front of the boy, but almost out of his reach, pulled it out four times in succession without another word. As for ringing the bell that was simple enough with the cord hanging right over Ralph's head.

"I'll do it all right after this;" Ralph said to the astonished fireman.

So whenever the boy saw anything in the distance that looked at all like a crossing he stood up in his seat and, stretching out, pulled the whistle throttle four times, two long and two short pulls, as the fireman had done. Then, sitting down, he would pull the bell cord to his heart's content. This was real fun.

"Better let her out a bit, hadn't you?" said the fireman again. "Guess we're a little behind time." Then the man grumbled to himself: "The old man must be sick to-night. I shall have to keep an eye on him."

Ralph had seen engineers starting trains, or increasing their speed, many times in his life, but it seemed very different now that he was really in the cab. His puzzled eyes wandered all about the cab in search of the throttle, and at last by good luck he laid his hand on the proper handle, but, as he tried to push it, standing on his step and putting out all his strength, the fireman shouted: "Pull it toward you, man. Don't push it." So the boy stepped down and pulled the throttle with all his might. "Not too much;" shouted the fireman. Then the engine sprang forward like a horse when its rider lays the whip to his steaming flanks.

The fireman still wondered why Ralph had started to push the throttle instead of pulling it. "You didn't think we were going too fast, did you, Jim? You don't want to slow down, eh?"

Of course Ralph should have known that when an engineer wants to increase the speed of his engine

he pulls the throttle toward him, letting on more steam, and only pushes it back when he wants to reduce speed.

"The water in your boiler is all right, I suppose?" hinted the fireman. "Tried your gauges lately?"

Ralph did not know what he was expected to have to do with the water in the boiler, what his gauges were, where to look for them, or what they would look like when he found them. But the good-natured fireman put his hand on three little valve wheels in a row, and each one, when he turned it, gave out a sizzling stream of water and steam. "Plenty of water;" he reported.

Every little while they went rushing by a small village station where accommodation trains would stop, but to which the "Limited" paid no more attention than if it was a barn or cattle shed. Usually these small stations were deserted, except, occasionally, for a telegraph operator whose duty it was to keep account of all the trains as they passed, day and night.

"It is easy enough;" thought Ralph. "I don't see why people told me I couldn't do it."

Now the fireman was shouting to him again: "We

are getting pretty near Rowley;" he was saying; "we have to slow down a bit as we pass through this city, you know, or we will get into trouble."

So Ralph slid down from his high seat in order to get his feet on the step, and pushed the lever. "Not too much;" said the fireman as the engine almost instantly began to reduce its speed. The boy then climbed up on his seat again and blew his whistle and rang his bell for another crossing. His little cheeks fairly puffed out with self-satisfaction. Surely there never was any fun like this!

As they approached the more thickly settled portion of the city of Rowley, lanterns of different colors began to appear scattered among the tracks in the most confusing style. These different lights in their different positions all meant something which the engineer, the real Jim, would have understood; but it was all a mystery to Ralph, and he was troubled for fear there was something he did not know about which he ought to do. He took comfort, however, out of the fact that the fireman seemed to have made up his mind he would have to keep his eyes open to help out "Jim," the engineer, who was not like himself to-night.

As they passed the station a number of travellers stood on the platform, waiting, as Ralph supposed, for some other train which would come behind, or which, going in the opposite direction, might pass the "Limited" and afterward stop at Rowley. One might have expected that the people would look astonished to see a little boy on the engineer's seat; but nobody seemed to notice any change. I suppose the fairy had arranged it so that Ralph looked like Jim to them, just as he did to the fireman.

As the train was leaving the last lights of Rowley behind Ralph saw in the distance a round staring light as if the brightest of moons were rising straight ahead of him out of the track, and behind it a great moving shadow.

"What is that ahead of us?" he cried. "We are running right into it. Shall I try to stop the engine?" And Ralph jumped down from his seat and began to push his throttle over.

"No! no!" cried the fireman; "that is only the down train on the other track; it stops at Rowley, you know." The fireman laughed, although somewhat uneasily, as he turned away grumbling to

himself: "The old man must be crazy; or perhaps he is just joking."

At that instant the down train swept past them with a screech and a roar, and Ralph thought it must be all right now to let his own engine go faster again; so he pulled the throttle a little farther forward than it was before.

"Have you forgotten your reverse lever?" growled the now much disturbed fireman.

"But I don't want to go backward, do I?" demanded Ralph. The fireman put his hand on the handle of what looked like a big bar of iron standing up from the floor right beside Ralph's seat. The bar stood tilted forward, but the fireman pulled the handle back so that the bar stood about upright. "That's the way to keep it when you are going at full speed or else you don't get the full value out of my fire."

The fireman laughed as if it was a joke that he should have to tell his engineer so simple a thing. He might have added that when the engineer really wanted to make his engine go backward he pulled the reverse lever over until it tilted backward. But Ralph was learning pretty fast as it was.

Quite a distance in front, now, he could see a

winding path of light like moonlight on water; so he supposed they would soon be coming to a bridge. It would be great fun to cross a bridge! Very likely he ought to "slow down" before he reached it; but he was ashamed to ask the fireman, who must already be thinking his engineer was behaving curiously enough. Anyhow Ralph could not interrupt him just then, because the much worried man was shovelling in coal.

Now the engine was passing between two high banks which shut off some of the moonlight, and Ralph began to feel nervous; so he clambered down from his seat and began pushing the throttle back so as to make the engine go slower. Then he pushed the brake handle halfway to the right. And at last, remembering about the reverse lever, he pushed it so it tilted forward instead of standing upright. He did not like the idea of rushing upon the bridge at full speed; even to think of it made him feel dizzy.

What was that red thing dancing to and fro down the track? It was too large for a firefly. At this moment the fireman slammed the door of the firebox again and, straightening himself up, gave a quick glance ahead. He suddenly shouted: "Throw

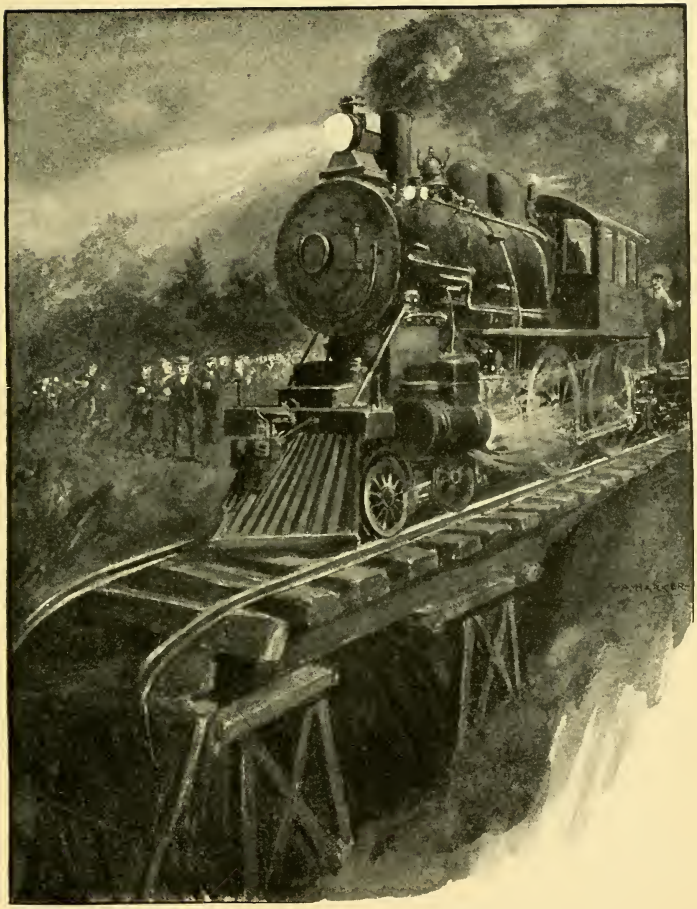
your throttle 'way over, man. That's the danger light! Throw your emergency brake 'way around! Are you crazy?"

Ralph threw all his weight against the throttle, and then pushed the air-brake handle as far to the right as it would go, while the fireman himself pulled the reverse lever back to its stop, and then let on full steam again so as to make the big wheels slide. Now a noise was given out by the groaning train behind as if the car-wheels, instead of turning, were grinding along the rails, but moving slower and slower every second.

"The bridge is gone!" cried the fireman. "Get ready to jump."

As the engine drew near to the brink of the river the frightened boy could see the black figures of hundreds of men gathered near the bank, on either side of the track, all of them with faces, white in the moonlight, turned now toward the approaching train. There was nothing more to do, but the engine and train moved slower and slower, and finally came to a full stop just on the edge of the bank where one end of the bridge had once rested.

At that instant Ralph felt a soft hand in his hand,



THE "LIMITED" IN DANGER.

and another laid lightly over his eyes; the shouts of the crowd and the panting of the engine died away in his ears; he was once more lying in his own bed, in his own home, even with his night-gown on. By the dim light which the moon threw into the room he could see his clothes, neatly folded over the chair by the bedside as usual, and his shoes lying on the floor beneath.

It was small wonder that Ralph was late to breakfast the next morning, or that his face was quite pale and his eyes had rather a feverish look.

"Why! what is the matter, Ralph?" cried his mother as he came into the room. "You look sick."

His father glanced at his son over the top of his morning paper.

Then the boy told of his wonderful experience of the night, a story which was so exciting to him in telling that he paid no attention to the breakfast which was cooling before him, or to the uneasy glances which his father and mother exchanged while he talked. When he had finished, his mother said: "Poor little boy;" and, crossing to him, she put her hand on his forehead. "You had a pretty trying dream, didn't you?"

"Oh, it was not a dream;" he said.

"I think we will send for the doctor;" broke in his father. "You need not go to school to-day, Ralph." Then he spoke in a lower tone to his wife: "I wonder if the boy has been studying too hard lately."

When Ralph's mother came back from the telephone her husband was again reading his newspaper. Suddenly he exclaimed: "Why, this is strange! The Limited Express narrowly escaped a terrible accident last night a few miles beyond Rowley. The bridge over Black River, weakened by recent floods, had given way. The 'Limited' was only stopped just on the edge of the river. That was like our Ralph's dream."

"But it was not a dream, father;" insisted Ralph turning half around as his mother was leading him to his bedroom.

Ralph stayed out of school a week before the doctor thought him well enough to go back to his studies. But it was several weeks later before he made any more complaints at not being permitted to do things which only grown people understand how to do. His parents really began to hope that his "dream,"

as they called it, had quite cured him of his bad habit. But with the passage of weeks the memory of that wonderful night's experience faded somewhat from Ralph's mind, and he began again to cast frequent envious glances on his elders when he saw them at their more interesting callings.

One afternoon his mother remarked to her husband: "Ralph is becoming almost as troublesome as ever. He has been teasing me for the last three or four days, almost continually when at home, to do quite impossible things. One time he wanted to tune the piano, another to help the man shingling the stable. To-day he wanted to take a handsaw and climb up in the maple-tree to help the gardener who was sawing off some of the branches."

It was that very night that Ralph was again wakened by a call from his fairy friend. The moment he sat up in bed, and his eyes rested upon his beautiful visitor, he quite understood what her call meant, and, even before she spoke, he was trying to make up his mind which of all the silly things he had desired to try he would this time ask to be allowed to do.

"You seem to have forgotten your lesson, Ralph;"

said the fairy trying to look very stern; a difficult task for her, I can tell you. "I thought that your night in the locomotive cab would have taught you a lesson which you would never forget. But I am now going to give you another lesson. What shall it be to-night?" This particular fairy did not believe in long scoldings.

"I think a balloon ride would suit me pretty well;" said Ralph slowly. "I have read about balloons and have seen two or three people go up in them. I am sure I should know when to throw out the sand, when to pull the cord and let some of the gas escape, and when to drop the anchor so as to catch into the ground and stop the balloon when I want to land."

The fairy looked fairly frightened. "Is that really what you want most?" she said. "Now don't say 'yes' without thinking, for it would be too late then to stop and think."

"Yes! yes! yes!" cried Ralph, the last "yes" the loudest of the three, and without another word his wonderful visitor laid her hand on one of his, and put her other hand over his eyes. Then all was very still, but as he looked about him he saw that he was in a balloon. Above his head was a great

ball of shining silk enclosed with netting something like the cords of a hammock but much larger. Other ropes connected the ball of shining silk with a sort of basket or car beneath, and it was in this car that Ralph now found himself.

First of all he looked all about the inside of his air carriage to find what it might contain. There were the sand-bags scattered about in the corners; he knew what they were for; they held sand which was for him to pour out when the balloon came too near the earth and he should want to make it fly up higher. There, too, was the anchor to throw out when he should want to stop and make a landing, and its rope, one end fastened to the anchor and the other to the bottom of the car. Then there was a lunch basket; he lifted the lid and saw some tempting-looking ham sandwiches, a delicious layer cake, a jar of olives, and a bottle of what looked like cold coffee; yes, and there was a pound box of chocolate bonbons. On the seat where he was sitting lay a wrap of some sort which, as it was quite cool, he lost no time in throwing over his shoulders.

But he could not understand why the balloon seemed to keep so still, and why he did not feel the

wind since here he was far up in the clouds where he had always supposed the wind blew very strong. It was a moonlight night, with the same full moon that had made everything bright on that wonderful locomotive ride of his just four weeks before. But he noticed that the moon seemed just as far off from him as it did when he was down on the earth, although now he was so far away from the earth that he could see nothing whatever below him;—perhaps there were some clouds below him which shut off his view of the earth. There was nothing very exciting about riding in a balloon as far as he had gone, if, indeed, he was riding. Perhaps if the balloon would but move, it might be more interesting. Then he fell to wondering if this was a runaway balloon, or if somebody had been spilled out of it.

After a few minutes he could see the earth below him, trees, fields, and houses growing clearer every minute. How they were racing by! No, that could not be; it must be then that the balloon was really moving very fast, although so smoothly that he could not feel the motion. You see the only way Ralph could know his balloon moved was by noting how fast the objects on the earth seemed to be going in

another direction. It was a rare sight. The moonlight now lighted up everything almost like twilight. At this moment he was passing over a town, but how flat and toylike the buildings were! Even the church looked from where he was like a bird house. A train of cars came into sight; really it was a very long one, but it seemed no longer or larger than a miniature train such as is exhibited at Christmas season in the shop windows. Then he noticed a bright light in one of the streets of the town; perhaps it was a bonfire; no, it was a building in flames, but to him it looked no larger than a torch. Everything grew plainer and plainer. He passed the town and was now sailing over some large body of water, a pond or a lake. He could even see a boat on it.

It must be that his balloon was going down too fast. So Ralph suddenly thought of the sand-bags and what they were for, and, lifting one of them to the railing of his car, which was just about all he could do, and opening the end of the bag, he let the sand slowly run out. As he did so, he noticed that he began to see the earth below him less clearly; so he must be rising. He emptied still another bag and must have gone up very high for everything below

him had disappeared from sight. It suddenly became very wet and black around him, and the water fairly dripped from his wrap, and from his little cap, the rim of which might have been the eaves of a house in a rain storm. It seemed that he had driven into a rain cloud. It was not pleasant at all.

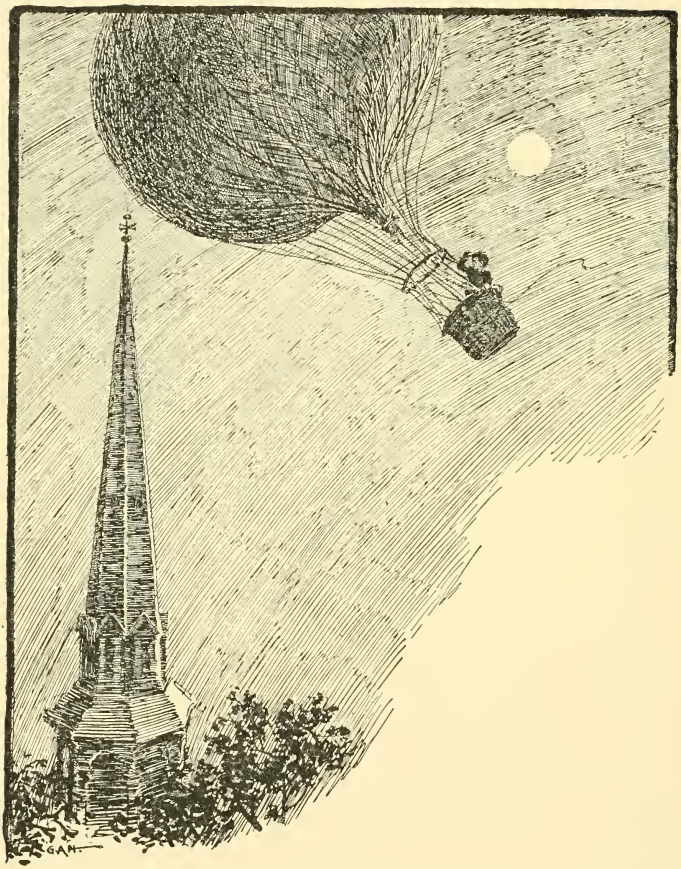
Perhaps he was going too high. He probably had poured out too much sand. Oh, yes! There was a way to prevent going up; all he had to do was to let out a little of the gas in the balloon bag over his head; it is the gas, you know, which makes a balloon rise. It was still so dark and foggy that he could hardly see his hand before his face. But he climbed carefully up on the side of the car and felt about, holding tight to the ropes that ran down from the gas bag, until he touched the handle on the end of a cord. This must be the cord to pull when one wanted to let some of the gas out. He would pull it only a little, he said to himself, and then let go; so there would be no danger of the balloon dropping down too quickly;—that would be even more fearful than rising too high.

Almost in an instant the balloon had dropped out of the wet cloud and into the moonlight, and it

seemed only an instant more when the earth and the hills, the mountains and the brooks, began to become plain to sight again. He was now approaching a town and was going down very rapidly, too. He must look out that he did not go down too fast or run any risk of landing where it was dangerous. Ralph now let go the handle of the cord; this would, he supposed, close up the pipe through which the gas had been escaping, and at the same time stop the balloon from dropping at such a fearful speed. But he kept hearing the gas still running out even after he had let go of the cord. Looking up, he could see that the cord had become tangled in the meshes of the network so that the opening into the gas bag was not entirely closed. If he had been taller he might have climbed up and straightened out the cord; now he could do nothing but tremble and wait for the end which must be near at hand.

The earth became clearer and clearer; he could even see a few people walking on the streets; at the rate the balloon was now going down, it would strike something in a very few seconds.

His eyes fixed on the spire of a church toward which his balloon seemed aiming as straight as a



THE END OF THE BALLOON VOYAGE.

stone thrown by a boy's hand. He could now see more people on the streets, and observed that they

were standing in groups watching his balloon and pointing it out to each other. They would like to help him if they could.

How foolish he had been ever to have chosen to take such a voyage, little boy that he was, unable to do the things which a man could to help himself escape from danger! Nearer and nearer he came to the church spire. He had even closed his eyes rather than look upon it; when suddenly he felt again over his grateful eyes the soft hand of his fairy friend, and, in an instant, he was back in his own little room and safe and snug in his own little bed.

Ralph was again late to breakfast the next morning and so tired that he could hardly drag himself to the table. One look from his mother's eyes was enough. "You have been having another of your wild dreams, haven't you, Ralph?" she said.

"It was not a dream at all, mother;" he said wearily. "It really happened. I must tell you before I can eat anything."

Before he was half through his story his mother had gone over to where her boy sat and had put her arms around him as if to protect him from the danger: Neither of them had noticed that his father had

stepped quietly to the telephone to call the doctor. So, just as Ralph finished his story, the doctor, who was a near neighbor of theirs and, it seemed, had just returned from an early morning call, entered the room. Ralph's father and mother were just about to explain why they had sent for him, but the doctor had something else on his mind. "There is quite an excitement in town this morning;" he said. "Sometime in the latter part of the night a balloon came driving down from the clouds and struck the spire of the old church, bursting the balloon and dumping all the contents out of the car. What is left of the balloon is tangled around the peak of the spire, and half the town is out looking at it."

Instead of asking questions, as the doctor had apparently expected them to do, Ralph's parents simply stared at each other and at Ralph in amazement; so the doctor went on with his story.

"There were some people in the street when the balloon hove in sight. If there ever had been any one aboard, he must have lost control of his airship. Some of the people were quite sure they had seen a small figure in the balloon before it struck the

church spire; yet it is very certain there was nobody in it when it struck. Two or three sand-bags, an anchor and its rope, a wrap and a lunch basket, were scattered about on the roof and on the pavement below, with here and there a ham sandwich, a bonbon and a piece of layer cake, which latter items apparently had been the contents of the lunch basket; but there is no sign of any human being, alive or dead."

The doctor was indeed surprised that Ralph did not show any interest in this strange event; anything to do with balloons is usually so fascinating to a boy. It must be he was really sick; so it was nearly a week before he was permitted to go back to school again, a wiser if not a sadder boy.

You may wonder whether Ralph talked to his friends about the remarkable adventures he had had, or thought he had had, on the locomotive or in the balloon. I may tell you that he said nothing about them except to his mother, and only very rarely spoke of them to her. He knew the boys would only laugh at him if he should repeat such strange tales. But, as occasion arose from time to time, he showed a knowledge as to the workings of a locomotive and

incidents of ballooning which gave him great credit among his acquaintances, and it certainly seemed for a while as if Ralph had been entirely cured of the "let me" habit.

The first real interest of Ralph's childhood, outside of his own home, had been the fire department. There was, as it happened, an engine-house on his street, only a few doors from his own home, and one of his never tiring pleasures was to be there at six o'clock each night when the horses came dancing out of their stalls, on signal, taking their positions at the engines as if about to rush to a fire.

Every time the fire-alarm rang he dearly loved, when at home, to listen for the feet of the eager horses as they struck the pavement in front of the engine-house, the sound growing fainter and fainter if the call was for another section of the town, or growing louder and louder if the route led past his house. Unless very tired when he went to bed, he was likely to be wakened by night fire-alarms and ready to take up the count as soon as the bell began to ring for the second time. There was a little card behind the clock in the dining room giving the numbers of all the boxes, and where they

were placed; and Ralph had studied this so much that it was rarely he could not tell, as he listened to the alarm, in what part of the city the fire was.

It finally came about, when he would get to thinking of the fairy's visits, that he would say to himself, were he ever to have another chance he would ask to be a fireman. Surely there was nothing grander in the world than to clamber on the running board of the hose wagon or of the hook-and-ladder truck as it rolled out of the engine-house, unless to rush bravely through smoke and fire, clad in the helmet and rubber coat of the fireman.

The lessons of that exciting ride in the Limited Express, and of his narrow escape when trying to manage a balloon, did not seem to count. He now was just as eager to help to put out a fire as he ever had been to run a locomotive or a balloon. He haunted the engine-house nearest his home, examined all the apparatus, and pursued the men with questions: How this or that crank, pipe, or button worked; how the men dressed so quickly; what opened the stalls of the horses; how it was that the fire started in the steamer just as it was rolling out of the house, and so on.

Ralph was always respectful, and chose his time for questions when the men were usually willing to talk with him. So he really learned a great deal more about the apparatus and fire-fighting than most boys of his age know.

He was quite at home in the large second-story chambers where the firemen slept, each company having its own room. At the foot of each of the neat iron cots a pair of long rubber boots stood ready to be jumped into when the alarm should ring; fastened to the boot legs was a pair of trousers. All the half-asleep fireman had to do, when the big gong sounded, was to slide down and off his bed and into the trousers and boots. Then, as he straightened himself up, he was really almost dressed, and, slipping his suspenders over his shoulder, he would run not to the stairs but to a brass pole in a corner of the room down which he slid through a hole in the floor to the room below. His big fireman's helmet and rubber coat always hung on the wagon or truck on which he rode to the fire.

But Ralph was even more interested in the horses and the part of fighting fire which they had been trained for. There were two horses for the hose wagon,

and each had his box-stall in the back part of the room where the wagon stood. Each horse was loose in his stall, but always wore his bit and bridle, — even when asleep or when eating his oats; — you see he must always be ready to answer to the fire-alarm. The front of his stall was a door which opened out at the first stroke of the big gong on the wall of the hose house, and the horse would come trotting out as eager to do his duty as was the captain of the hose company himself. Each horse took his own proper place, without waiting for word or touch, beside the pole of the hose wagon; then the collar of the harness, which hung from the ceiling, dropped, and an attendant snapped a catch in front, and connected the reins with the bit at right and left. By this time the driver was on his seat, and the six other members of the company had leaped to their stations on the hind step or on the running boards on either side, and were buttoning their rubber coats about them. Now the rope in front of the usually open door dropped, the driver pulls his reins taut, and the horses plunge ahead. It was a noble sight. No wonder Ralph loved to see it.

There were three stalls in the room where the great

steamer stood, three horses abreast being required to draw this heavy machine with the driver and engineer. The fire-box was filled with kindlings and shavings soaked with oil which blazed up as the rear wheels of the great engine struck the threshold of the engine-house, and smoke in clouds was pouring from the funnel before the monster had travelled the length of the street.

But yet it was the hook-and-ladder truck which interested Ralph most of all. There was no other sight which charmed him as much as that of the long truck loaded with hooks, axes, ladders and various tools of fire-fighters, as its three galloping horses whirled it along. The driver with his feet braced, and his hands in the "grips" of the reins, bends forward and back keeping time with the great leaps of the three excited horses. Over the rear axle sits the tillerman grasping his steering-wheel with hands of iron. No turn for the street corners could be made of this long vehicle except for his skilful work. When the driver turned a corner with his horses he always kept as close to the curbing as possible, but the tillerman steered the hind wheels straight ahead until the rear of the truck passed the corner, then he

turned them into the same direction the horses had already taken.

How many times Ralph teased the captain of the hook-and-ladder truck to let him ride to a fire. The captain, for a joke, would send him to the chief; the chief would refer him to the tillerman who would say he was willing if the driver would consent, and the driver would always offer some sort of absurd excuse. Finally Ralph saw they were all laughing at him and made up his mind to keep away from the engine-house at least for a whole week. The week was not half gone before he was already finding it very hard to keep to his resolution, while at the same time his ill temper at his former best-loved friends, the firemen, had not cooled even a little. But on the night of the third day he awoke, just after one o'clock, to find the pretty fairy sitting on the edge of his bed and shaking her finger at him.

"Oh, is that you?" he called out, "I am glad to see you. Please mayn't I have another chance?"

"I am surprised;" she said very seriously. "I supposed that before this you would have learned better than to tease to do old folks' business. What is it now?" She tried her best to keep a grave face, but

her own half-roguish smile at last broke brightly through like sunshine through a cloud. Just as she asked her question the fire-alarm bell began to ring: One, — two, — three; then came a short pause: One, — two.

"Thirty-two!" exclaimed Ralph, jumping out of bed. "That's the corner of Main and River streets. It must be the waste mill. Oh, I wish I were a fireman now."

The fairy's left hand was over his eyes in an instant, and her right hand took his in its thrilling clasp. The familiar walls of his own bedroom faded away, the chairs and bureau he knew so well vanished; he was in one of the chambers of the engine-house, just pushing out of his cot; already his feet were in a pair of fireman's boots; in a moment more he was upon his feet and pulling up the waterproof trousers while he slipped their suspenders over his shoulders. Six other firemen, — he knew them as belonging to the hook-and-ladder company, — all of whom a moment before had been soundly sleeping in the six other cots, were already in their boots and trousers, and, one after the other, running to the brass pole in the corner to slide to the room below. As Ralph

crossed the room to follow he caught a glimpse of himself in a mirror. It was not "Ralph" at all, in appearance, but a hook-and-ladder fireman whom he had always heard called "Tom" that he saw. His face was rough with unshaved beard, and his arm, bare to the elbow, was as big as any man's. It seemed that this time the fairy had made a real change in the boy's body, giving him now a man's strength and size. At last, thought Ralph, as he sprang gayly toward the sliding pole, he would be a real grown-up fireman, and go to a fire which he could really help to put out. He could swing an axe as he rushed ahead of the hosemen, and smash down doors, or break open partitions like Tom himself, whose place and in whose boots and trousers he was to play the hero to-night.

He had practised on the sliding pole before and now made the descent very smoothly. What a glorious noise and stir there was below! The three horses, one between the poles and another on either side, were already in place; the tillerman was settling himself in his seat and firmly grasping the steering-wheel; the driver, without hat or coat, was just drawing up his reins for the glorious start.

Two firemen were climbing on the running board on the side next the wall where the big alarm gong was still repeating the impatient story: — Ding, — ding, — ding, —, (stop), ding, — ding; — and the others were taking their places on the running board at the opposite side, all struggling into their rubber coats and hastily donning the awkward-looking helmets that had been hanging on the truck. Ralph rather clumsily pulled himself up, getting but one arm into his rubber coat before the long vehicle rolled out of the engine-house and the driver turned his half-crazy horses up the street on which Ralph lived. The tillerman kept the rear truck straight ahead until all was clear, then quickly swung his steering-wheel and brought the axle beneath into line. Ralph thought nothing in the world could be finer. Ahead was the hose wagon, with its two horses, and, just behind, rolled the smoking steamer, like a volcano on wheels, shedding burning cinders as it moved, its three powerful horses struggling bravely with the great weight as they tried to make good their place in the whirlwind procession.

Ralph was so awkward in getting on his rubber coat and helmet at full speed that his comrades

laughed at him, but he was repaid for his effort when, just as the hook-and-ladder truck swept past his own house, he saw an upper window hastily raised and his father thrust out his head. The boy let go with one hand of the iron frame, to which he had been clinging, so as to wave a salute to his father, and tried to shout, but he was silenced by the hoarse sound of his new voice, — it was really Tom's, you know. Although his father was somewhat surprised to see the fireman wave his hand, how much more astonished he would have been if he had known that the big fellow was in fact his little ten-year-old boy.

Do not ask me where the real Tom was. Perhaps, made over by the wonderful fairy to look like the boy who was going to the waste mill fire in his place, he was in Ralph's little bed. Certainly, when Ralph's father unlocked the boy's bedroom door and glanced in he thought he saw a childish head on the pillow.

But Ralph had no thought now but for the waste mill fire; for all the hook-and-ladder men had agreed by this time that it was indeed the waste mill which was burning. The overhead sky reflected the copper color of a night fire, the color patch being encircled

by purple black clouds. Windows of the houses on the route were now more frequently raised, and here and there an open front door showed an excited group of half-dressed people. Farther along there were men and women and children running toward the firelight; but few indeed of them that did not stop to look at the hose wagon, truck, and steam fire-engine, as they went roaring, crashing, clanking by, the drivers alert and fearless, with calm faces and steady eyes, the horses thrilling with spirit,yet almost as self-controlled, while the fire of battle and the desire for glory made the bold, brown eyes shine from afar.

Not until Ralph's company drew very near the burning waste mill was he reminded that there was any other apparatus in the city besides that which he called "his"; but now he saw in half a dozen different directions the smoke of as many steamers, while the pavements of as many streets gave out their clanging complaints at the iron blows of galloping horses.

Even now the crowds about the burning building were so great that the police stretched their fire lines to keep back all but the firemen. How grand

to be one of the firemen! thought Ralph, with high-beating heart.

Only one of the steamers was to be used, the direct streams from the hydrants carrying far enough for all lines of hose except that which was to be taken to the top rounds of the aërial ladder. Ralph noticed with pleasure that it was the steamer from "his" engine-house which was the chosen one. Already two men were piping to it from the nearest hydrant, while two others were connecting an end of a long line of hose to another coupling on the same side of the steamer. As soon as the aërial ladder had been raised the nozzle men would be running up its rounds dragging the hose after them.

Ralph had managed to get down from the running board of the hook-and-ladder truck without spraining his ankle, and was now watching some of his comrades turn the crank which raised the aërial ladder. It was all very interesting; at the very first turn of the crank the ladder began to lift from the back end of the truck.

"Take hold there, Tom!" shouted the captain. "What's the matter with you?"

So Ralph, luckily remembering that he was not a

mere looker-on, but was expected to do Tom's work, did his fair share in raising the long ladder which was made up of several short sections. Next, the men sprang to the cranks which wound up the cable and pulled out the different sliding sections of the ladder, called "flies," like a telescope until the whole length was as great as the height of the building. Then two rubber-covered nozzle men climbed up its dizzy rounds until almost concealed by the smoke from the upper windows of the mill, and the funnel of the steamer began to spout fire and smoke with a rasping, snarling roar, like the breathing of some suffering beast of monster lungs, as it labored to pump a stream of water to the top of the ladder.

It was growing hot where Ralph stood, even after he put the truck between him and the burning building. He was beginning to think that outside of the fire line was after all the better place from which to see the fire. But then came the voice of the chief:—

"Take an axe, Tom, and help Bill break in the basement door. Step lively there." The chief was now thinking of helping the other hose and nozzle men get streams into service.

The basement door fell in with a crash before the blows of Ralph's great axe, and smoke poured out in choking clouds. "There's fire in there;" shouted the chief again. "It must be behind that board partition: In with you, boys, and cut it down!"

A very Hot Place.

Then, as even Bill hesitated an instant, — Bill, the bravest man in the company, — the chief added: "We'll give you a stream of water as soon as the partition is down."

Sure enough the fire was there. "More water,

boys!" The fire was blazing fiercely beyond the partition, and already the hot forks of flame were darting out where Ralph stood.

"Put your coat sleeve before your face, Tom;" said his companion, and just then a cool stream of water poured past them and through the hole which the axemen had made, and great clouds of smoke and steam filled the whole basement.

"Let's get out of this;" said Bill, in a husky voice. Ralph did his best to follow, but so thick were the steam and smoke that he could not see which way to go. Then the smoke choked him, and he dropped upon his hands and knees and began to crawl. He could hear the sound of falling timbers about him and the roar of the flames above him, and had given himself up for lost when a strong hand suddenly gripped his shoulder and he was fairly dragged up the basement stairs.

"That was a close shave for you, Tom;" said Bill, peering into Ralph's face to judge if he was good for more work. "Pull yourself together and hurry now. The captain has just ordered us up to the top of the mill to break in a door: The hosemen are ordered to get water on the fire from above.

I don't like our job myself, but those are the orders. Come on. Here are our stairs, now."

By this time, you may be sure, Ralph had had far too much of the fireman's life, but the boy had a brave heart, and the dread of being afterward ashamed of himself was ever before his eyes. So he needed no urging, but made haste to follow Bill who, under the captain's orders, now led the way, axe in hand, into the burning building and up the smoking stairway while the crowd back of the fire lines sent up a hoarse cheer.

It was high time the fairy interfered, and it was with thankful heart that Ralph again felt a soft hand over his eyes, while another rested in his. He heard Bill call to him: "Tom, where are you?" and that was all. He was safe back in his own room and his own bed again. Perhaps the real Tom went on duty at that very instant.

The waste mill burned to the ground that night, and the newspapers of the following morning were filled with interesting descriptions of the most famous fire the city of Rowley ever had. There were pictures of Ralph's own rescue from the suffocating basement, and brave return to duty and danger, shoulder

to shoulder with Bill. You may believe the boy was very much interested in it all. And he always meant to ask the real Tom, in whose boots and trousers he had stood during the earlier part of the fire, where that veteran fireman had been meantime, and what his recollections of that night really were.

Once or twice Ralph thought that Tom, when they passed each other on the street, was about to talk the strange affair over with him. Ralph was half ashamed to speak to his old friend on the interesting matter, and kept putting it off; and as for Tom he began to avoid the boy as if afraid of something which might be said between them.

But the only really important outcome of it all was that Ralph was cured for good of his teasing habit.

STORY OF THE UNDERWORLD

JOHN HOLMAN was only just eleven years old, yet he was a great help to his mother, who was a widow. He was always planning how he could save her from hard work and anxiety, just as his father had done as long as he had lived.

John was a fast runner and a high jumper; indeed he was the best among the boys of his age in the village in all outdoor games. But he found time also for a great deal of work. Being bright and willing as well as strong, he earned something almost every day to take home to his mother. When there was no other work to do, there was the fishing, and few boys were more skilful with line and rod than was John; he knew, too, just the places where the fattest clams could be dug and the finest crabs netted.

I know you will not think the less of him when I tell you that, since the time when his mother began to read aloud to him, he had always been very much

interested in the old tales of brave knights and fair ladies, of princesses in distress and bold champions that came to their relief. Whenever his work was cutting down a tree, he used to "play," as he wielded his axe, he was attacking some giant of old, or fighting desperately with a wicked magician for the rescue of some fair lady held under enchantment. When digging in the field, or in the clam beds, or even hilling potatoes, he liked to imagine that he was seeking after some mysterious treasure or exploring some passage leading to fame and fortune.

If any one had asked him whether he really believed in fairies, I suppose he would have said "Pooh"; yet, when one night about three o'clock a little lady with shining wings wakened him by a light tap with her ivory wand, John was not at all frightened.

"I have work for you to do;" she began without delaying for any polite inquiries as to his health or remarks about the weather.

"I am pretty busy;" answered John coolly as he sat up in bed. "You see fishing is pretty good just now. I was going out to sea in my boat before sunrise."

The fairy smiled: "My work is under the sea:

Are you brave enough to undertake it? If you succeed you will never have to go fishing again, or hoe anybody's garden, or run errands for money; you will have more than enough of the good things of this world as long as you live."

"Enough for my mother, too?" asked John eagerly. The fairy nodded with an even sweeter smile. "And she won't ever again have to sew until her back aches?" The fairy shook her head. "Then I will do your work. But you say I am to go under the sea. How can I do that?"

"Dress quickly and come. You will find me at the door;" and she faded from his view as a reflection of a face in a pool of water fades when the water is ruffled by the breeze.

But when John, a few minutes later, came out on the sidewalk his usually happy face wore a troubled look. "My mother expected me to go fishing very early. Here is the lunch which she left for me on the kitchen table;" and John showed a tin lunch box. "But if I shouldn't get home by noon she would surely be worried."

The fairy smiled again. She was well pleased with this boy who was always thinking for his mother.

"I will change myself into a fisherman," she said, "and take your mother word that you have work to do which will keep you away until late to-night. I will see that she doesn't worry. Now bring your spade, please."

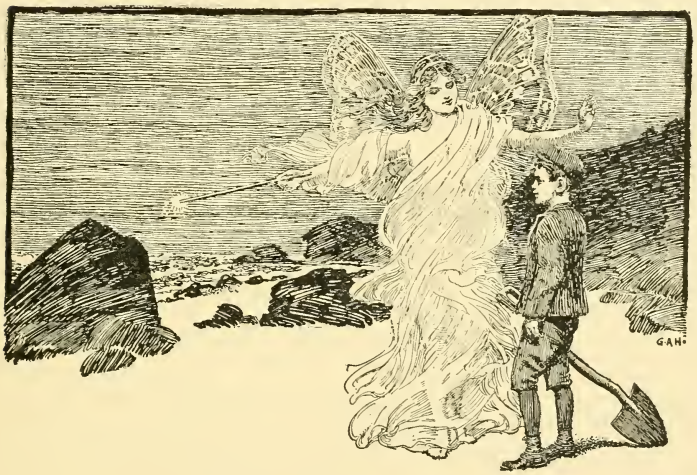
John shouldered the spade, which he found by the doorstep, and walked along beside the fairy who just touched her twinkling little feet on the sidewalk as she guided him away from the village and toward some rocks which faced the sea. The tide was running out; you know the tide of the sea runs in and out twice each day. It was nearly low tide now, and one could see the whole face of these rocks clear down to the sand, although, when the tide was high the same rocks would be half covered with the water of the returning tide.

"Here I must leave you;" said the fairy. "But first I will tell you where you are to go, how you are to get there, and what you are to do after you get there."

They had reached the rocks which, when the tide was high, were partly covered with the water but now showed their moss-covered faces clear down to the sand. You see the fairy had planned to bring

John to the spot when the water about these rocks was lowest, so that he would find them entirely uncovered.

"I want you to go around that tallest rock to the side which faces out toward the sea," said the fairy



THE DOOR TO THE UNDERWORLD.

pointing with her ivory wand, "and dig away the sand you will find banked up against it. Then come back and tell me what you see."

John took his spade around the rock on the side facing the sea and began to dig away the sand. It was bright moonlight so he could see well to do his

work quickly, and very soon he rushed back to the fairy, who all the while had kept well up on the dry sand as if she were afraid to wet her dainty gown.

"There is a little iron door right in the face of the rock;" he cried. "I tried the knob on the door and it turned in my hand like any door knob. Am I to open it and go down?"

"Yes;" said she, clapping her hands. "That is just what you are to do. Now listen carefully to what I say."

So John leaned on his spade while the fairy, whose beautiful wings were trembling as if eager for their invisible flight, gave him her commands.

"When you open that door you will be looking into the vestibule of the Underworld which lies under the sea. There are people in that Underworld, as there are in your world; but they do not talk as you do; you can't understand their words; and they can't understand yours. All the sunlight which those people have is what little gets down through the water, where it is not deep or when the tide is lowest, and then strains through the floor of the ocean in those few places where it is of some clear stone, like glass. But they have electric light, all they want of

it. You will find a great many things which will surprise you, but you are to stay only until to-night, and not to forget what you are going for: — that is to bring back a little girl. This little girl belongs in the sunlight world and is very unhappy in being kept away from her own world."

John's eyes had dropped while she talked, and it was several seconds after she had finished before he looked up to ask some further directions. The fairy was gone. Glancing in every direction he saw not so much as the flutter of a wing, although he was certain he heard a gentle "Good-bye."

For a moment he stood undecided, afraid of the task laid upon him, and yet ashamed to fail at the call of duty. Then he carefully hid his spade in the coarse sand-grass, well up above the reach of the high tide when it should rise, and went back to the iron door. He was none too soon. The returning tide was already within a few inches of the bottom of the door; he must make haste if he were to get through before the water reached it. He turned the knob again and this time pulled on it with all his strength; the door, which was only half his own height, opened barely enough for him to squeeze

into a dark, uninviting pit where water stood up to his ankles,—not a very cheerful vestibule, he thought, for the Underworld.

No moonlight at all entered here, but his foot touched what seemed like a step, and, not far off, as if at the top of a long staircase, he could see a faint light. Now, without an instant of further hesitation, John closed the little door behind him and began to grope his way along and upward toward the faint light. The water on the floor of the rocky passage grew more and more shallow, and he was pleased to find the bottom quite dry as he reached a higher level, where the water, which at high tide leaked in around at the edges of the door, did not rise. Then he saw a wall of rock in front of him, but, glancing down, he found it was broken away below to leave a passage leading forward, but downward again, something like very rude steps. It was here that he had first seen the faint rim of light which came up from this strange Underworld where his errand must take him.

The steps, which were very narrow as well as rude, made several half turns as he picked his way, until he made up his mind that he was at last going in

the opposite direction to that in which he had started; — that is, that now he was, indeed, going under the sea. The thought at first sent little tingling chills up and down his back; if he was not afraid he was certainly very nearly so.

But now there were no more steps; he was following a steep, narrow path, which wound twistingly downward like a slanting letter S. It was quite light but, since he knew it was too early for sunrise, he concluded this must be the electric light of which the fairy had spoken; but he could see no lamps because they were cunningly concealed so as not to dazzle the eyes.

The path ended in a plain, the further bounds of which John could not see; but, instead of a blue sky, with a silvery moon and glistening stars, there was a sort of ceiling like that of a great room. The ceiling was much higher, to be sure, than that of any room, and seemed to be supported by tall piles of rock shaped like pillars. The electric lamps, he now discovered, were concealed in recesses cut in these pillars.

John thought he heard a sound like the rush of water. Could it be there were rivers in this underground world, too? He made his way toward the

sound and, in a few minutes, he came to a river, and at its bank he found a most remarkable boat. It was certainly different from anything he had ever sailed in. His heart gave a great bound of joy, and he began to examine with great curiosity this strangest of all craft. It was of metal hammered out very thin, hardly thicker than a sheet of paper. A single screw was hung at its stern, and what looked to him like an electric motor stood in the bow. Whoever lived in this under-ground world was very skilful in boat-making, he thought; and you know John was a boatman, himself, in a small way, and his opinion was of some account. He could hardly wait to seat himself in the boat and experiment with the machinery; then he quickly found the starting switch and turning it saw with delight the screw slowly begin to revolve, and the boat moved through the water.

John drove the boat up-stream a little way, turned it, by means of the steering-wheel, as easily as a bird turns itself in its flight, twice crossed the river and indeed was having the best time of his life. He was so interested in his new pleasure that he did not notice a movement in the little cabin or see a boy

just wakened from his nap creep out from within, until suddenly the owner of the craft pulled himself up on the seat.

You may well believe John was startled. He let go of the wheel that guided the course of the boat, which would have run against the rocky bank at full speed and been badly injured, if the newcomer had not quickly reached over and stopped it.

"How do you do?" said the Underworld boatman as coolly as if they had really been just introduced. "Where did you come from? You don't look as if you lived in our world."

"No;" answered John trying to take things as coolly as did his new acquaintance. "I have come down from the sunlight world on a short visit, or really a sort of business trip. I am looking for a little girl who, as a fairy told me, wants to get away. I am to take her back with me, you see."

"Is the name of the little girl Anna?" asked the owner of the boat in excitement. "Anna wants to get away. The air down here makes her ill. She has headaches all the time just as her father did before he died. He came down here with Anna a long time ago."

"I don't know the girl's name;" answered John in surprise. "It must be Anna, though. But why didn't you help her to get away yourself?"

"I didn't know how:" said the other boy. "I was going to drive my boat up this river as far as I could in hopes that I could find a way out. But now you are here it will be easy;" and he took John's hand. "My name is Crito, what is yours? John?" he repeated after him pleasantly. "Now we are friends. How different your clothes are! How different you look! Your voice is not like mine."

It was very true. The texture of the skin, where it showed bare on the arms and legs of the Underworld boy, was fine and delicate like a baby's; his eyes were bright, to be sure, but soft and more gentle in their expression than John's, while his voice was more musical and gentle in its tones.

"What is that you wear on your head?" continued Crito, eagerly. "I never saw anything like it. Are you afraid something will fall on you?" and he laughed merrily.

Crito wore sandals protecting the soles of his feet, but leaving the insteps exposed, and his clothing consisted simply of one garment folded ingeniously

so as to cover his body and the upper part of his legs, leaving the arms and the lower portions of the legs free. A wide, bright belt, which glistened like fine spun gold, encircled his waist, and a strap of the same shining material extended from the belt, crosswise, over his chest and one shoulder. He wore nothing on his head; indeed it would have been as unnecessary to wear a hat in this under-ground world, with its roof of stone, as it would be in a house.

John was curious to hear about this remarkable Underworld into which he had so easily found his way, but he controlled his impatience and did his best to answer the questions of his host.

"I came down here," he said, "through a door in the rock. My home is up above your roof, in a great world up there which you don't know anything about. The reason I wear a hat is because it rains up there, and fierce winds blow, and the sun's rays are very hot. Of course you never get rain through your roof; and it seems to be just warm enough here all the time, although where the heat comes from is more than I can understand. My cheeks are red and my skin is rough because of the

trying sunlight which we have in the outside world. You see you get only a little bit of strained sunlight here; it has to make its way first through more or less water, and then through your quartz roof; our sunlight is dazzling. Then the rough weather up there, the winds and sometimes the cold, make the skin tougher and harsher. It seems to be very still down here, and when you speak, you don't have to raise your voice; in the big outside world it is different; perhaps that explains the difference between your voice and mine. But I am awfully hungry, and I suppose you eat down here the same as we do in the world outside, though what you find to eat in such a place I can only guess."

"You must pardon me;" said his host. "I didn't remember that you probably came a long way. But, as I had expected to be away until night, I have brought a lunch with me. Now you can eat my lunch, as I shall not need it, and then we will start back down the river."

Crito drew a little bundle from a cupboard in his cabin and laid it out on the rocks near the shore; there John and he sat down together like old friends.

"We shall be going home just as soon as you

finish," said Crito, "and, first of all, you shall see Anna. It will make her very happy to meet some one from her own sunlight world. Here are eggs," continued the Underworld boy spreading out his lunch on a flat rock, "and here is some broiled fish and some potato bread."

"Tell me, while I am eating," said John, "where you get your food down here. Certainly things won't grow in this rock, such as we are using for our dining table."

"Oh, no;" answered Crito. "But it is not all hard rock down here. You see the river grinds the rock and mixes different kinds together and so gives us, in some places, a good soil. Our air is different from yours, so Anna says; perhaps it is better for vegetables although not as healthy for men and women. So, wherever the ceiling is of that glass-like stone, and the water is not all the time too deep over it, vegetables will grow if we water them and help them with the electric wires at their roots. Down south, where the sunlight is much brighter than here, many more good things to eat grow, and the people down there send them to us."

"Of course you have no butter;" said John.

"Oh, yes. We make butter from our goats' milk. I don't know what we could do without our goats. They are useful in so many ways."

"Do you eat them?" asked John between mouthfuls.

"Oh, nobody would eat goats;" exclaimed Crito. "It would seem too cruel to kill them. Many of our people dislike even to kill and eat fowls."

Having finished the last mouthful of the lunch John sat looking curiously at his new friend's clothes. "What a beautiful belt and strap you wear! I wonder what they are made of."

"Of gold;" his friend answered quietly. "Most of the boys wear the same."

"They must have cost a great deal of money, I should think;" exclaimed John admiringly.

"I don't know what you mean;" said Crito. "We don't have money down here. There is plenty of gold in the rocks: Some of our people get it out, and others know how to beat and shape it into belts and girdles and all sorts of pretty things. When we want a belt or strap we go and ask for it. The things are of no use to those who make them except to wear themselves or to give away.

Now if you will get into the boat we will run it down to my home. The motor is a fast one, and it won't take very long to get there."

"How long would it take to walk?" asked John as he stepped into the boat.

"Oh, I don't know;" answered Crito. "Nobody walks down here. We all have our little motor cars. Even the children by the time they are five years old learn to run them. The cars all go by electricity drawn from the air or from a lump of coal, so, you see, it is no trouble to drive about wherever we want to go."

"You are cleverer than we are, then, in this at least;" said John as the boat dashed through the water at a high speed. "It costs us a great deal of money and labor to get electricity for driving our boats or power wagons. Before I go back you must show me how you manage to draw the electricity so easily from the air or from coal without a fire; I must report to the people outside. But, first of all, how is it that you talk English just as I do?"

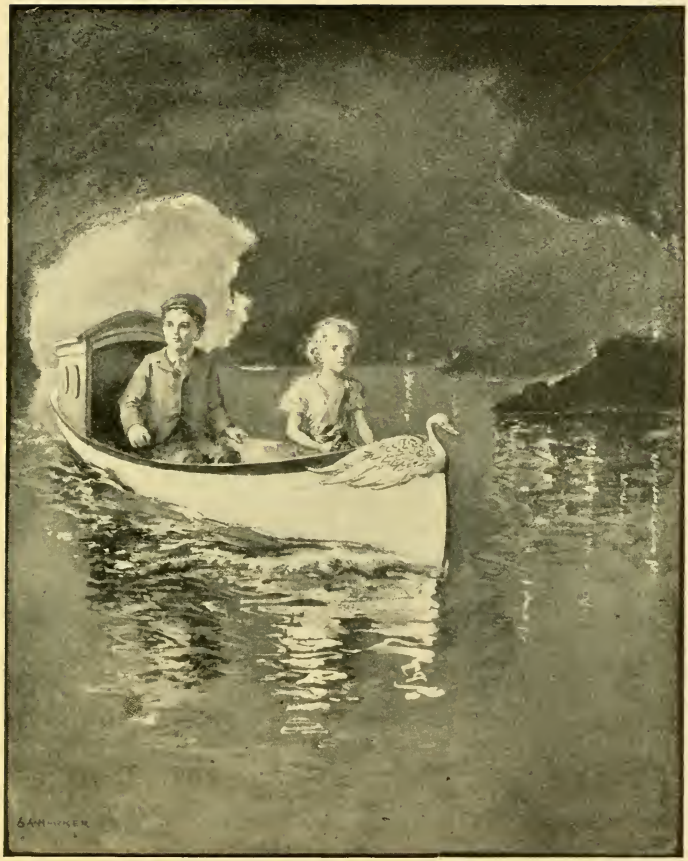
"I learned English from Anna;" explained Crito. "I am the only one who did. The others you could not understand at all."

It was a wonderful ride which John had on that Underworld river in the motor boat running as fast as does a railroad train in the upper world. The electric light was everywhere, but in many spots the ceiling was almost like glass, and the sunlight now began to come through it as if through a stained glass window in a church; beneath these sunlit spots were gardens where certain kinds of vegetables and flowers were growing.

"What keeps it so warm here?" said John. "It is like a comfortable room all the time."

"That is not a very hard question to answer;" replied his new friend. "There are openings or clefts in the rock which go down, I don't know how many miles, toward the centre of the earth. You know it is very much hotter down there; so enough heat comes up through those openings to keep our air just an even heat. Without this heat, you see, it would be very chilly here, with so much water above us and no real sun heat coming to us."

The river now grew much narrower as it approached a passage or tunnel in the rock through which its course lay. The water was very rough just outside the tunnel entrance, where the river dashed



THE PASSAGE OF THE STRANGE TUNNEL.

up against the rock on either side of the opening, and Crito ran his boat slowly and carefully.

"How loose those big boulders look!" exclaimed John pointing to the rock above the mouth of the tunnel. "It wouldn't take much to start them, and if one or two of them fell into the mouth of the tunnel, it would stop your boats sailing in this direction for a good while, I think."

"I never thought of that;" said Crito as the boat glided into the passage. "But I don't see what could ever happen to start the boulders, do you?"

John was too much interested in what he saw to reply. But it was not very many hours afterward before he could have answered Crito's question. The tunnel was wide enough, perhaps, for several boats like Crito's to go abreast, but John noticed that the steersman kept pretty near to the middle, as if there might be dangerous rocks in the river-bed at either side. The tunnel was very bright from hidden electric lights, and the water shone and glistened in dancing ripples. Above him the rock hung down so low in some places that he could have touched it with a long pole. It was an exciting as well as a delightful ride, and John drew a breath,

which was partly one of relief, when the boat came out into the open.

John now began to see other boats; some were moving in the same direction as Crito's, but at a slower rate of speed; some passed his boat as if going up through the tunnel; some were coming down other streams which ran into this main river of the Underworld. Many of the craft on the river were much larger than the boat in which John and Crito were riding, and contained family parties; some carried freight, appearing to be loaded with different kinds of food or clothing, and coming perhaps from hundreds or thousands of miles away. Crito now made the boat go slower, and John could see more clearly the little gardens by the side of the river where the sunlight was brightest, — or rather was least dim, — for it was not really bright anywhere; John recognized potato vines, and what looked like peanut stalks and onions, except that they all had a sort of purple shade.

Then a question occurred to him. "How do your gardens get their water if it does not rain here?" Then he saw the answer to his question. Little canals or ditches had been dug from the river in all

directions through these gardens so that the water spread among the roots of the growing things. "That is better than rain;" he exclaimed. "We do that in many parts of the upper world where it seldom or never rains."

He could now see motor cars of all sizes dashing over the smooth, rocky roads, some only just large enough to carry one person each, others large enough to carry twenty people. Many curious glances were cast in his direction, and most of the motor cars soon appeared to be taking one course, and that toward the point where Crito's boat was headed. John observed, too, that most of the motor boats were drawing into the wake of Crito's craft so that, when the steersman stopped at the landing, as many as fifty other boats, big and little, began to draw up toward the same landing. John had become a person of no small consequence, a visitor from an unknown world, a stranger from a strange land who could reveal curious things to all who might inquire.

"You must not think nobody works down here;" said Crito. "Indeed, everybody works, the women as well as the men. But it is early in the morning, you see, and before working hours."

As Crito led John up from the dock where he had fastened his power boat, the occupants of the other boats landed in turn and, fastening their boats, followed along at a respectful distance, soon being joined by the curious along the streets, as well as by all the motor cars in sight. In fact, as the boys drew near Crito's home, it was really quite a procession which they found themselves leading.

"I hope you don't mind the people;" said Crito. "They are very much interested in you. If my father were here he would give out that they should all have a chance to hear your story later; but it would hardly sound well for a boy like me to say it."

"I don't mind;" said John. Indeed, he rather liked being the object of so much interest. But he was half tempted to walk backward so that he could more closely observe these people who were fully as interesting to him as he was to them. There was quite a number of women in the throng now; the only difference in their costume appeared to be that their drapery reached somewhat lower than the knee, and that there were some sort of half-sleeves for the arms. Most of the women had strings of jewels about their necks and bracelets of gold on their

wrists, and many of the prettier ones had little circlets of gold, set with precious stones, about their foreheads. All of the men and women were much smaller than John had ever seen in the upper world, and more delicate-looking.

"I will ring the bell;" said Crito as they stopped at last at the door of his house, "so as to give my mother and sister notice that I have a guest with me. I call Anna my sister."

While they waited on the piazza for an answer to the bell John had time to notice the outer appearance of his friend's home, which was almost entirely surrounded by a wide piazza. You see, in a country where there was no rain, and where the "out of doors" was heated, the piazza would naturally be the most pleasant of all places to sit. On the piazzas of most of the houses John could see people sitting, men, women, and children, many sewing, reading, or playing games, and others simply watching whatever was going on. All of the houses appeared to be but one story in height.

The door opened and a little girl stood looking in surprise at John, her surprise changing to joy before she spoke.

"Oh, you are just like the boys I used to know in the upper world. Did you come to take me away from here? Say 'yes,' oh, say 'yes';" she cried taking John's hand.

"Will the people be willing to let you go?" asked John doubtfully.

Anna looked distressed, and it was Crito who made the reply: "I am afraid it will not be safe to ask them. They would never let her father go back. But we must plan it all by ourselves, we three. I will help all I can. I love Anna too much to want her kept here against her will. Where are my father and mother, I wonder."

"They are taking a ride in their car," said Anna, "but will be back soon. Come into the house. Everybody can watch us and I get so tired of being stared at. It worried father, too. Did you get shipwrecked on a little island, as father and I did, and did these people come up out of a hole in a rock and catch you?" Then Anna shook her head sadly. "That must have been a long distance from here. You and I could never find our way back there. It was very hot on that island, but beautiful flowers and delicious fruits grew there; it was one of the

daylight gardens of these staring Underworld people." She was leading John from one room to another of the house, but her mind was on her trouble only. "Did they catch you on an island, too?"

"No;" answered John. "I came down not so very far away from here; a fairy sent me to find you."

"Really!" cried Anna, and her pretty, pale face flushed with excitement. "And do you think we can get away? Just think of it, the sea is right over our heads. It is hard to believe that I can ever get back to the sunlit world. I am afraid, rather, you will have to stay here yourself, too."

"But why should these people want to keep me?" asked John uneasily. "My mother will be very anxious if I don't get back home to-night. The fairy told me, too, I must come back to-night."

Crito tried to explain to John. "You see our people want to learn all they can about the upper world. There are many things which we have learned from those who, by some accident or out of curiosity, have come here. But we are never satisfied, and nobody has ever yet been allowed to go back."

It was a strange kind of house. The wide hall, running from the front door straight through the house, was without ceiling; so was the outer reception room, on the right, which they now entered. John then bethought himself that there was, of course, no occasion for ceilings to rooms, or roofs to houses, in the Underworld, since it could never rain here, and there could be no such thing as bad weather.

The walls were stone, and around them, in the reception room, ran ledges for seats; goatskins were strewn on the wall seats and on the floor. There was a metal table supporting an electric lamp, while even the chairs seemed to be made of the same thin metal like that of which the boat was made. The metal was bent in convenient and graceful curves and beautifully engraved and colored.

"You see the rooms are open at the top so we always have fresh air, while the side walls are high enough to give us all the privacy we could wish. Let me show you one of our bedrooms."

The bedrooms were all on the left of the hall, opposite the reception and sitting rooms, and were small and quite sparely furnished, although each room had its running water pumped up from the

river. There was little closet space; the family did not have many clothes to take care of, it seemed.

"You have no windows in your bedrooms;" exclaimed John in surprise.

"No;" explained Crito. "There being no roof to our house, the bedrooms are wide open toward the sky of our country; our really private rooms, you see, like our bedrooms, our sitting room, kitchen, pantry and store room, need no windows to insure fresh air."

Only the reception room had windows, but they gave full view of the street and river; it was here that the members of the family probably sat when they wanted to see others and were quite willing to be seen. But there was no glass even in these windows, and no way of closing them; they were merely open places hung with bead network which might easily be drawn aside or caught back out of the way.

Now they had come to the kitchen. "Our cooking," explained Anna, "is all done at these little electric ranges; they also heat our water. All the smells of cooking are carefully caught and taken care of so as to prevent spreading through the town. The

waste water is carried away from the houses by pipes which run a long distance to a deep fissure in the rock, emptying many thousands of feet below."

"Who does your cooking?" asked John.

"We are our own cooks;" answered Anna with a laugh. "Each family does its own housework in this under-ground country. There is so little work to do, you see, and everything is so convenient here, that it doesn't take much time out of any day. We don't have so very much to eat; nobody works very hard down here, and we have nothing to worry or disturb ourselves about; so I suppose we don't need anything like as much food as you upper world people do."

"Do the women in this country have any work besides their own house-keeping to do?" asked John, as they came at last into the family sitting room.

"Oh, yes;" said Anna. "That is, those that don't have little children to take care of; mother, for instance, goes to a shop and helps make girl's clothes such as I wear. But not one of the women is kept away from home more than three or four hours a day."

But Anna had no time for further explanations; the front door opened, and a little man and an even

smaller woman came along the hall into the sitting room. Neither of them had any wrinkles, such as people of the upper world show so early in life, on their faces; indeed, their foreheads and cheeks, while lacking in color, were as smooth as those of their son; — John saw at once they were Crito's father and mother.

The little man rushed eagerly up to John and shook hands very heartily while trying to tell him something in a strange language. Crito touched his father on the arm and said something in the same language, probably reminding him that John could not understand the Underworld language. Then, turning to John, Crito spoke in English: "My father says all our people are very eager to see you; there are so many things they want to learn about the upper world."

No sooner, indeed, were the words out of his mouth than a dozen little men and women pushed into the room, followed by as many more. Behind them a great many were working their way, in a sort of procession reaching quite a distance on the street, up the piazza steps, along the hall leading past the reception room, up to the sitting room where the children had been talking. Crito stood on one

side of John, and Anna, looking very much frightened, stood on the other, all three behind a table so that the people could not crowd against them. But the rest of the strange little room, without windows but wide open above where John had always supposed a ceiling ought to be, was crowded to the door with eager men and women, all of whom were talking at the same time and making odd gestures. Finally they seemed to agree upon four of their number, — two men and two women, who should ask the questions which poor John was expected to answer.

If this story were to be twice as long, I should not have space to repeat half the questions that these curious Underworld people asked about the world above, all of which Crito attempted to turn into English so that John could understand.

First a woman would ask what medicine the upper world people used for headache; then a man would ask how they learned each other's languages. One man would ask what else besides electricity they used to make boats and cars run: Another, what other light and heat they had besides that which came from electricity. Then a woman wanted to know about

sewing machines, and a man asked about air ships; another man expected John to explain just how cloth was made by machinery in the upper world, and then a woman expected a full explanation of the art of the dentist, and another insisted that John ought to be able to tell them how to take photographs.

You see the people of the Underworld had learned from occasional accidental visitors, like Anna's father, something about the remarkable upper world people and the marvels they performed. So, when another accident brought them a new arrival they had hundreds of hard questions ready for him. But poor John felt he was making a very bad showing. About many of the matters he knew nothing whatever, and even about the matters with which he had supposed he was well acquainted he found his knowledge to be so little that it was of no help now. Anna, who knew the language of these people, was becoming quite anxious at what she heard them say to each other. She whispered to John: "They think you are keeping things back. Can't you answer their questions better?"

"I am doing my very best;" he whispered in

return. "I didn't suppose I was so ignorant. Do you suppose they will shut me up in their jail?"

Anna shook her head doubtfully, and Crito, who had overheard them, said: "I am afraid so. But you can count on me to get you out again."

Just at this moment Crito's father made quite a long speech which Crito turned into a very few English words for John. "Yes, it is as I feared. You are to be shut up in one of the rooms in our house, and a guard placed outside. Never mind, I'm your friend." Then turning to Anna, who was beginning to cry, he took her hand gently and said: "Don't be discouraged. We'll think of some way of getting John out when we want him."

John was not allowed to become at all lonesome that afternoon and evening. Every hour he would receive a visit from some of the Underworld people; now and then he was able to give answers which made them smile with satisfaction, but more often he knew so little on the matter inquired of that his replies were of no value. Either Anna or Crito was with him all the time so as to be ready to turn the questions into English, and then to change his

answers, such as they were, into the Underworld language.

Anna and John became quite like old friends after he had told her about his mother, and about their little home to which he hoped soon to take her. She then told him of the voyage her father and she were taking when their ship was wrecked on an unknown island, and how the Underworld people found them there. Anna then tried to explain to John how the Underworld got fresh air through clefts in rocks and openings into unknown islands; how it was that vegetables grew even in the little sunlight of the garden plots because the air was somewhat different from the ordinary upper world air, and because the people ran electric wires among the roots in the soil. She told him that their motor cars ran very fast and all about in the Underworld, so that whatever grew in the soil, or was found in the rock, in any part was quickly taken wherever else it might be needed.

But she preferred to talk about the upper world, repeating over and over how happy she should be to get back there. She would go to school like the other children, she insisted, although she supposed

they would laugh because she knew so very little for her age.

It was well into the evening when Crito, finding John alone and quite sad, told him to be on the look-out for the end of a rope which would soon be dropped over one of the walls into the room; the other end would be caught fast above so that the rope would bear John's weight. When the end of the rope dropped over the wall that would be the signal that it was time for John to climb up. Once on the wall he would find it wide enough to walk on; he was to loosen the upper end of the rope and make his way along to the wall at the rear of the house, which was nearest the river, then let himself down and run as fast as he could to the river bank. At the river bank he would find a motor boat waiting for him; he was to jump into it and push at full speed back over the route they had come that morning. It would be the same boat in which he and Crito had come down, and there was none faster at the dock.

"But where shall I find Anna?" asked John, his heart beginning to beat hard with excitement.

"She will be waiting for you in the boat;" answered Crito smiling. "I, too, shall be near by;

but you will not see me. I shall be tying the other boats together so that, if your escape is discovered, the people cannot follow without at least a little delay. You see I can't keep them long but even three minutes might save you. Now good-bye."

Tears came into the eyes of both the boys as they shook hands. "Why won't you come with us?" urged John.

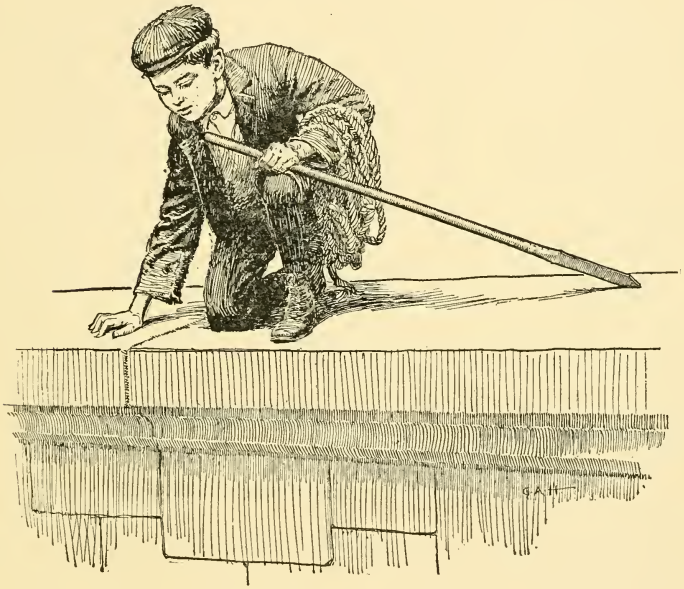
"Oh," answered Crito moving toward the door, "that wouldn't do at all. I should be as unhappy there, and as out of place, as Anna is here. Good-bye."

It was only half an hour later that John's attention was attracted by a sound behind him; turning, he saw a stout rope dangling down from the wall. The other end seemed to have been caught above, in the top of the wall, by a sort of crowbar driven into a crack between the stones. The rope was knotted so as to make it easier to climb, and John was halfway up the side of the wall in almost the time it takes to tell about it. When he reached the top he drew the long iron bar from the crevice where it had been driven and, coiling the rope over his arm, picked his way carefully along the narrow path on

the wall which separated the rooms of the house, as Crito had told him to do. If Crito's father had been on the lookout he would certainly have seen the boy as he made his way, as noiselessly as possible, along the top of the wall which ran between the main hall and the sitting room. John supposed, of course, his head jailer would be in his bedroom and sound asleep by this time of night. What was the boy's terror, then, to see him at a table in the sitting room below, his head resting on his hand in deep thought! At the very moment that his prisoner was trying to escape, he was planning some new hard questions to put the coming morning. Fortunately the man was so seated that his face was turned away from the wall along the top of which the boy was now tremblingly stepping.

When John reached the rear wall of the house, he saw, almost at his feet, the motor boat, in the little cabin of which he knew Anna lay carefully hiding for his coming. There being at hand no convenient crevice in the wall to hold the crowbar about which the loop in the rope could be caught, John at last found in the wall one of the stone blocks somewhat higher than its neighbors; around this he caught the rope

and then let himself carefully down. He still kept the crowbar in his hand; it had helped him once, and he thought best to take it with him either for a tool



JOHN GETTING READY TO DROP.

or a weapon as the need might arise. Once on the ground, he ran toward the boat as fast as he could.

"Is that you, John?" called a girlish voice from the cabin.

"Yes,— Anna. — Hush. Keep out of sight for a

minute more;" said John. He was in the boat in a second, touched the switch and the beautiful little boat was driving up-stream, turned the switch more and more until the boat was going at full speed.

"Now come out and sit beside me;" he said at length to the happy little girl. "It seems as if we were really going to get away without pursuit."

"How kind Crito was!" she said. "A real brother could not have been more so; I wish he were with us. I asked him to come."

"So did I, but he shook his head;" said John.

It was quite a little time that the children sat in silence while their boat fairly flew through the water. Then Anna looked at John in sudden anxiety.

"I am sure those lights are moving;" she said pointing far back to the village. "The people must have already found out that you have escaped and be getting ready to follow us in their boats."

"That is true," answered John slowly and seriously, "but our boat will go no faster. Crito tied all the other boats together, you know; but that would only delay them a few minutes. If we can think of no way to stop them we shall surely be caught. We are almost at the tunnel now."

"But our boat is as fast as any;" urged Anna trying to keep up heart.

"They would overtake us after we left our boat to climb up the steps which I told you about;" said John shaking his head. "Let me think. I brought my crowbar, you see."

"Boats have to run in the middle of the tunnel, one behind the other, for fear of striking the rocks." Anna hoped something she might say would give John an idea. "If we only could dump a big rock behind us in the middle of the channel."

John laughed with joy. "Just the thing!" he exclaimed, and at this moment their boat shot into the lower mouth of the tunnel. "I shall have use for this crowbar. How lucky I brought it! See!" and he pointed far back toward the village. "The boats are moving our way at last but they have to come one after another just as you said."

"I can count the lights of ten boats;" cried Anna. "Yes, and there are more behind; I think the whole village must be coming. Poor Crito, how worried he will be! But tell me how you are going to go to work to stop up the river channel."

"I will explain so that you can carry out your part

of the plan;" answered John. "When Crito and I were coming down I noticed some big rocks loose in the wall at the upper mouth of this tunnel, and right over the channel. I spoke to Crito about it and told him that sometime those rocks would fall and stop the passage." Anna began to smile and, leaning forward, rested her hand on the boy's arm in her excitement. "You see," laughed John, "the time for that rock to fall will be when I get to it with this dear old crowbar. Your part will be to take the boat to the bank of the river a little above the tunnel. I will then climb along the ledge of rock and get to work with my crowbar in just the place where a little work will do wonders."

Everything went as the boy had planned; he easily loosened a big rock over the mouth of the tunnel by digging away some soft stone beneath it. Then the rock thundered down right in front of the leading boat of the Underworld people, making a great splashing of water. John threw away his useful crowbar, clambered back along the ledge of rock to the boat which Anna held waiting by the bank, and soon they had left the low tunnel mouth out of sight in the distance.

"Here is where we land;" said John at last, drawing the boat to shore. "The winding path and rocky stairway I have told you about are over there;" and John pointed off to the right.

"We must run, too," cried Anna, "or they will catch us yet. You see, they will follow in their motor cars."

"So they will;" and John looked about anxiously as they stepped ashore. "Now I am going to let our boat drift so they won't know just where we landed."

The children had reached the bottom of the hill and mounted the steep path before the first of the motor cars in pursuit appeared in sight.

"Wait here a minute," said John, "until I first go ahead and see if the pit behind the iron door is full of water. Keep hidden!"

It seemed very long to Anna before John returned. "They are coming up the hill;" she whispered and, drawing him to one side, pointed down where they could see one motor car after another stop and its passengers alight and start up the steep path.

"They will be just too late;" said John with a happy laugh and, taking Anna's eager hand, he led her up the winding stairway, then down the rough steps into the dark, unpleasant pit by the iron door.

The water was ankle deep but the brave little girl did not hesitate to follow her guide. He found the

THE ESCAPE FROM THE UNDERWORLD.

knob in the door, turned it, and helped Anna out into the bright silver light of the moon of the good old upper world.

With clasped hands and big, wondering eyes, she looked at the starry sky far above, then at the billowy sea, the foamy beach, and finally in the distance at the roofs of the village where her home was hereafter to be. She was a very happy girl just then.

In a few minutes John had carefully piled sand against the iron door so it should not serve as a trap to tempt the curious. Then, hand in hand, the children made their way into the village and to the door of John's home.

The quick ear of the boy's mother, anxious at his long absence, caught the sound of the steps at the door, and you may believe she was surprised to find with him this pale but beautiful girl with belt and bracelets of spun gold and a necklace of uncut jewels.

Lighting a lamp, she drew both children to her, one on either side, and heard the story which I have been trying to tell. Sometimes it was John who was talking and sometimes Anna.

"But you will be a rich woman;" said John's mother. "These jewels are worth a fortune."

"But these are not all;" the child cried, and she drew from the bosom of her garment a little bag, and, as she shook it, the precious stones within rattled

like pebbles. "My father saved them for me and made me promise not to take off this little bag until I was safe in the upper world. But here I am, and they are all for you so that you can take good care of John and me. For I shall never leave you."

So Anna and John and John's mother soon went to live in a beautiful house; and when the two children grew up they were married and lived happily ever after.

STORY OF THE THREE WISHES

FRANK was not a bad boy at all. He was respectful to his parents, polite to others, not fond of mischief or of pestering his little friends. But he was discontented; that is, he had a habit of thinking that others had better things than he and making himself unhappy by thinking of it.

The truth was that Frank was a very fortunate boy. His father was able to give to him all that any boy needed to be happy. He had a nice soft bed at night, good things to eat, all the candy that is healthful for any boy, all the playthings he had any use for and, best of all, a pleasant home.

Frank's mother was loving and kind. She did not let him run any risk of being hurt, yet she gave him all the liberty which was well for him.

He had kind brothers and sisters who were always willing to give up their own pleasure to amuse him.

Yet Frank was discontented. His little heart was filled with envy of other boys of his own age who, he

thought, had a better time than he. His discontentment spoiled his life, and all that his father and mother could say made no change in him. When his careful mother said "no" to his begging for permission to go swimming with his little friends he used to wish he had a careless mother. When she would not let him play in the dirt he used to cry bitterly. When she would not let him stay out-of-doors in the evening he would be sullen for a long time afterward.

At other times Frank used to envy boys whom he knew that had ponies of their own, or who could ride in carriages, or who wore clothes much finer than his. Some of these boys would tell him of the nice things they had to eat, such as were not seen on his own table. He would sometimes see the inside of the house of such a boy, with its much grander furnishings than those of his own home. He often envied its large grounds with ponds and shade trees, orchards and playgrounds. Then he would come home miserable, and nothing his mother could say would comfort him.

Frank was in a fair way to grow up to be a very unhappy man in spite of all that he had to make him cheerful. His loving father and mother often

had long talks together about him, but could think of no plan to change him which had not been already tried in vain.

But it happened, fortunately for Frank, that the fairies had been watching him for a long time. They saw that he was in the main a good boy and were very much afraid that he might grow up wrong just from his one great fault. Good boys, they thought, are worth saving. But how to save him? That was the question. So a great meeting of the fairies was held one day, and each fairy was asked to say what she believed the best thing to do for this boy.

One fairy said her advice was to punish him by making him suffer, so then he would be more likely to be thankful for whatever blessings he might afterward have. Another fairy suggested that they give him everything he wanted, since, except for his discontent, he was a very good boy. Other fairies made different suggestions, but the plan finally decided upon was as follows: It was agreed that the best thing of all would be to give the boy, for a while, what he thought he wanted.

That very night Frank had just fallen asleep in

his own little room when he was wakened by a rustling of wings, and, opening his eyes, he saw half a dozen beautiful fairies about his bed. He knew they were fairies because his story-books told how fairies should look.

A Visit from Fairyland.

He was not at all frightened but only very much interested in his unusual callers. Like the little gentleman he was, he said: "How do you do?" and the fairies, like the true ladies they are, answered him sweetly and remarked it was a pleasant night. The boy had a delightful talk with his surprising

visitors about all sorts of things. He asked them many questions which his father and mother had never been able to answer, and if he had only been able to remember their replies this story would have had to be much longer to make space for them. But at last one of the prettiest of the fairies spoke to him as follows: —

"Now, Frank, you are a very good boy in all ways but one. You are discontented."

At this Frank blushed, and he covered his face with the sheet, although it was so dark, except for the brightness of their faces, that his visitors could not have seen whether his cheeks were red or white. Then the fairy went on: —

"Although you have a kind father and mother and enough pleasures to make any boy happy, you are not satisfied. You keep thinking that another boy has something which is better than what you have. Isn't that so, Frank?" And he replied, "yes," in a low tone.

"Now," said the fairy, "we are going to give you whatever you ask in three wishes, something which no boy has been given for thousands of years. Do you think you would be perfectly happy if you had three wishes granted?"

"Why, yes;" cried Frank in delight, "I wouldn't even ask but one wish."

The kind fairy smiled. "So you think now;" she answered. "But you might make a mistake in one wish and afterward be sorry for it, so we are going to give you three wishes. We will give you whatever you ask in your three wishes."

Frank did not wait an instant. "I know what would make me perfectly happy," he replied. "I would like to be in Charley's place. He lives just over the street in the great house."

And all of a sudden the fairies were gone and Frank concluded he had been dreaming. It was quite dark in his room now, and he turned over in bed and went to sleep again. But, when he was wakened next morning by the sunlight streaming in at his window, nothing in the room looked as it had the night before. The windows were covered with the richest lace curtains, instead of the simple shades that he was sure he saw when he went to bed the night before. Over his bed he discovered, when he looked up, a canopy of silk; the counterpane was like a rose leaf, while the linen was delicately fragrant and welcome to his childish flesh — nothing like the

bed where he went to sleep the night before. He glanced at the floor and found it finely polished. Why, the furniture of the room had all been changed. In place of the simple chairs which had been in his room before, he now saw silken couches and velvet ottomans which seemed too nice to sit upon.

Frank bounded out of bed and shouted for his mother at the top of his voice. He wanted to thank her for the wonderful changes in his room and to promise never again to find fault with his bedroom. But, instead of his mother, a woman whom he had never seen entered the room to say: "You will wake your father and mother."

"My father," replied Frank, "has been gone to his work for an hour, I am sure. And my mother always gets up long before I do."

"Nonsense, Charley;" said the woman crossly, "you know better. If you want to be dressed get up quickly, but do not disturb the house."

"But who are you," demanded Frank, "and why do you call me Charley? I am sure I never saw you before, and my name is Frank, not Charley."

"Tush, tush;" said the woman, "what nonsense is this? Surely I ought to know your name; I have

taken care of you since you were seven years old."

"I want my mother;" cried the boy. "Will you please go away?"

But as the woman stood arranging his clothes, while she waited for him to get out of bed, Frank noticed that the clothes were very much finer than those he had taken off the night before. Then, all of a sudden, he remembered the visit of the fairies which he had afterward concluded was only a dream. He had used his first wish and was now, as he had asked to be, in the place of the rich boy in the grand house over the way. He felt a pang of homesickness and, for a moment, he longed for his dear old bedroom with its simpler furniture, and for his own dear mother to smile on him and say some sweet word. But he tried to think of the thousands of boys in town who had no such beautiful room. So, when he opened the door to go down-stairs to breakfast and saw the great hall, which was almost as large as the whole of the house he used to live in, he told himself that he ought to be glad he had spoken his wish as he had to the fairies.

It does not take a hungry boy long to find the

dining room in ever so strange a house, and what a grand room this was! It was big enough for dining room, kitchen and parlor together, he thought, and the floor was of polished oak, while the table itself, with its rare and glistening china, almost took his childish breath away. A waitress showed him to Charley's seat, seeming surprised that he did not know which it was, and set before him a dish of fruit such as he had never seen before. With the natural appetite of a boy he lost no time in helping himself, and had eaten so much as to frighten the maid before she spoke unpleasantly of the convenience it was to have a doctor for next door neighbor to a greedy boy. It was just then that he thought of his mother and father and asked for them.

"Why," replied the maid, "what is the matter with you this morning, Charley? You know your father and mother never eat breakfast at this time in the morning."

Now Frank remembered that the breakfast hour at what used to be his home was the pleasantest in the day, and felt very homesick for a moment.

The breakfast was such a one as Frank had never eaten before, and that he will remember as long as

he lives. The waitress did not know what to make of his appetite, since the real Charley, much like his father and mother, had usually only just tasted of his breakfast.

After breakfast Frank called for his hat. He was in great haste to play with Charley's trained goats which he had so often desired for his own. He wanted to see Charley's pony, too, and make plans about a gallop. But at just this moment the woman who had wakened him in the morning appeared and said: "You know you must not go out to play in those clothes."

"Where are my other ones then?" demanded Frank impatiently.

"Your mother said you were to go to drive with her this morning;" answered the governess. "You are to stay indoors until she is ready."

Frank decided that the goats and pony could wait. Now would be a good time to explore the house. In a minute more he was in the grand library and rummaging among the shelves for picture books. Charley had once told him that he had picture books in bright colors with gilt edges. But the governess was at his heels. "No, no;" she cried.

"You know perfectly well you are not allowed to disturb these books."

Just beyond and opening out of the library was the music room. Frank could see through the half open door the black and white glistening keys of the piano; if there was nothing better, he could at least drum on the piano as he often had done on his own mother's "at home," although he would rather have played at something altogether new. It took but a moment to skip across the music room; then, seating himself before the piano, he began striking the keys loudly.

"Stop, Charley, stop;" cried the governess. "Don't you remember it is forbidden for you to play on the piano?"

"What can I do, then?" asked the boy. "Is it time to go to drive?"

"Why, no;" answered the governess. "Your mother will not be ready for an hour yet. Go up to the play room and amuse yourself, if you want to, but don't soil your clothes."

Frank followed the woman out of the music room, and up the broad oaken staircase. He was feeling anything but happy. What good was it to be in

Charley's house if he could not enjoy any of the fine things?

The play room was not very attractive with its old furniture and bare floor. A shelf or two contained a few torn books, while in an open box he found a jumble of toys, none of them in perfect condition. Frank thought he would not care to exchange his own playthings for Charley's if these were all.

The boy began to feel very miserable now. At first he thought it was because he was so disappointed in the pleasures of the new life. But soon he made up his mind he had stomach ache. He threw himself down on one of the chairs and began to cry. His governess made him lie on the couch and brought him some peppermint to drink. But he felt worse rather than better and kept calling for his mother. So the woman at length went out to find Charley's mother, but it seemed a long time to the unhappy little fellow before she came in, a handsome woman dressed fashionably for her morning drive. "Why, Charley," she said hurriedly kissing him, "the carriage is waiting at the door. What is the matter with you?"

"Oh, I feel sick," he said, "awfully sick."

"It is only that he ate too much breakfast;" explained the governess. "He will be all right in a few minutes."

"Well, send for the doctor, if you think best, Sarah;" said Charley's mother moving toward the door. "I must go now."

"Don't leave me;" cried the boy. But the door closed after her, and a few moments later he heard the rumbling of the carriage as it rolled down the driveway.

After a while the boy cried himself to sleep. But when he awoke he felt better and, getting off the couch, he began to try to amuse himself with Charley's playthings. A piece of toast was brought up for his lunch. But the doctor had said he must not go outdoors that day, so he passed a very tedious afternoon. At five o'clock he was permitted to go downstairs to his tea. Charley's mother sat with him at the table, but she did not eat anything.

"Aren't you hungry?" he asked.

"Not yet;" she said. "I shall have dinner, you know, with your father and our guests later."

"Can't I come, too?" cried Frank.

"Why, of course not;" she answered. "Little

boys don't have dinner so late. Come, Sarah," she called, "Charley is so cross I can do nothing with him. Better put him to bed early."

And this ended Frank's first day in Charley's place. He did not like his beautiful bedroom, or care anything about the lace curtains on the windows, and when he fell asleep at last it was to dream that he was the old Frank again, and that his own dear mother was putting him to bed and kissing him good night.

Suddenly he heard a rustling of wings in the room, and one of the fairies stood at his bedside. "What makes you cry?" she asked in her silvery tones.

"I'm sorry I ever wished to be in Charley's place;" whimpered the boy. "He doesn't seem to have even as good times as I did."

"Oh, yes, he does;" said the fairy laughing. "It is only that you don't have the same kind of good times in Charley's place that he did when he was here."

"Where is he now?" asked Frank, his curiosity getting the better of his grief for a moment.

"Oh, you mustn't ask me that;" she said. "Per-

haps he needed a lesson, as well as you, but a different sort of one. He may be at the other end of the world for all you may know."

"But what does my dear mother do without me?" demanded Frank, beginning to cry again at the thought of his own mother, whose loving care had not been enough to make him contented when he had it.

Then the kind fairy kissed the little boy. "Don't worry about your mother;" she said. "We have put another boy in your place. She thinks he is her own Frank, and I am not sure but he behaves fully as well as her own little boy did."

But now Frank wanted to know why it was that Charley had seemed to have good times. "His mother doesn't love him as much as my mother loved me."

"Oh, yes, she does;" answered the fairy. "She shows her love in different ways, that is all, and you are not used to her ways. Charley, too, enjoyed himself in his way just as you enjoyed yourself in yours."

But before the boy could ask any more questions the fairy was gone, and, after trying his best to understand it all, Frank finally fell asleep again.

The next day Frank saw Charley's father for a few minutes at lunch, and heard him talk with his mother about the tea she was to attend that afternoon and the party to which they were bid in the evening, and his heart came up in his throat in a lump so that he could eat hardly anything.

Frank had a ride on Charley's pony, but the stableman who rode with him could not spare time to go where the boy wanted to go, so there was more trouble. Frank tried to hitch up the team of goats to the beautiful little wagon, but the harness was broken and the stableman was too busy to fix it for him and would not let the boy have the tools to do it himself.

Frank then thought it would be great sport to get a board and play "ship" in the pond, which was shallow and not at all dangerous. He found his board, launched it on the pond, and was just ready to make his first trip, using a long pole for an oar, when his governess discovered him and gave him a sound scolding.

He then thought of climbing some of the trees in the apple orchard. But no, he must not do that; the gardener said it would injure the trees, and the governess said it would soil his clothes. So all that

He thinks there is More Fun Outside.

was left for him was to go to the tall iron fence and look through it at some youngsters who seemed to be having fine times in the street.

Frank watched the boys at play in the street for a long time. They played ball, chased each other, careless whether they fell down in the dirt or not, and seemed to be having more fun than he had ever had in his whole life. He particularly noticed little Sammy Smith who was the most ragged of the lot. He had known about Sammy for a long time and often envied his freedom. If Sammy wanted to stay out in the evening no one called him in. If Sammy wanted to go skating he went, whether the ice was safe or not. Sammy went in swimming when he chose. He climbed trees when he chose, went to school or stayed at home according to his own whim. Nobody that Frank knew had as much reason to be perfectly happy as had Sammy, although his father was poor and his mother had so many children she did not know what to do, and even if they all lived in a miserable little house, slept four in a bed, and never had their hands and faces washed. There must be fun for Sammy Smith. So thought Frank as he looked out into the street. Then he spoke aloud: "I wish I was in Sammy Smith's place."

In an instant Frank was outside of the tall fence instead of inside. The first thing he noticed was

that the boy who took his place inside the fence, the real Charley, looked a great deal happier than he himself had felt when he was there. Next he discovered that it was not nearly as good fun to be playing in the street as it had looked. Then he was knocked over by a bigger boy and fell into the gutter, his ragged clothes worse torn and dirtier than ever. His nose bled and his knees ached but, when he began to cry, the other boys set up such a shout that he dried his dirty face on his dirtier coat sleeve and tried to laugh. Then he went into the rough play again and saw how the real Charley inside the fence enjoyed looking at him. Perhaps the real Charley was now wishing he was a poor boy. But just at that time a passing teamster, becoming angry at the boys for being in his way, struck at them with his whip. A policeman soon came along and told them he would take them to jail if they did not stop playing in the street. The fun was all gone, and Frank made his way to the little house where Sammy lived. He was tired and hungry.

But as he walked up toward Sammy's miserable house Frank's heart sank. He did not at all want to go inside. It was just that minute Sammy's

mother spied him and screamed that he must come in quickly if he wanted any supper. She wore a soiled calico wrapper with a still more soiled apron; her hair was carelessly tied up and did not look any too clean. At her skirts hung two of Sammy's many brothers and sisters. She gave Frank another look and cried: "You have been fighting again, you naughty boy, and have torn your clothes. I have a good mind to whip you. Wait until father comes home and sees you; then you'll catch it."

But what a supper it was! Frank's appetite left him very suddenly when he saw the bread and molasses, cold potatoes and crackers set before the hungry family.

The table-cloth was spotted with the spillings of many meals, and there were only knives and spoons at the plates. The bread and molasses did not taste any better than they looked, and the boy's appetite was not helped by noticing how Sammy's brothers and sisters smeared their faces with every mouthful.

What with trying to keep an eye on all the little ones at once, as well as filling the mouth of the baby in arms with sweet morsels to keep him from crying, the tired mother could have little chance to eat.

Frank thought how different were the meals in his own home, the table spread neatly and covered with tempting food, each one thinking first of serving others, and making the display of the animal instincts as modest as possible.

The boy cast his eyes about the strange little dining room. There was no carpet on the floor; the walls were without pictures, except for the clippings from Sunday newspapers which were tacked up here and there. No two chairs looked alike, and there was not a perfect one among them all. The floor was cluttered with all sorts of rubbish, — broken playthings, scraps of newspapers, a book or two, a dustpan half full of floor sweepings, a torn child's hat, a dirty pair of shoes, a broken bat, a ball with the cover half torn off. Frank's heart swelled bigger every moment as he compared this home with the one he had known and with which he had not been satisfied.

Just then one of Sammy's brothers fell into a dispute with one of his sisters as to the ownership of a slice of bread. The dispute changed into a squabble, and the squabble into a battle. Three saucers of molasses were spilled over five children and their

chairs, to say nothing of the table spread, before the mother could lay down the baby and reach the scene of action. In a moment more four pairs of lungs were sending forth wailings. Then a heavy tread sounded on the doorstep; it was the father returning from his hard day's work, and the children all knew that he was not always very gentle on these home comings, so their voices were suddenly stilled as if at a signal. As for Frank, his blood froze in his veins as he recalled Sammy's mother's remark as to what would happen when "father comes home." He had never been harshly punished in his life, and it seemed to him that to be whipped by this rough man would kill him. He sprang from the table and, catching his torn cap from a peg, rushed out of the back door at the same moment that Sammy's father entered at the front.

The boy ran quite a distance before stopping to catch his breath. He did not care where he went if only he escaped his beating. The town clock struck eight o'clock and then Frank stopped to think it all over. There was no further danger from Sammy's father, and here he was in the open air at eight o'clock at night. His own mother had never permitted him

to be out after dark alone. How often he had stared out of the cheerful rooms in the home which had once been his and envied the boys whom he saw running in the street. His time had come at last. He, too, could run in the street. Somehow it did not look nearly so cheerful from this side of the window.

But there were many other boys who had the run of the streets. He did not know all of them, but they all seemed to know Sammy Smith for whom they took him. As to those he knew, he remembered that his mother had forbidden him to play with them. The bolder ones among them said it would be good fun to ring bells and run away; so a plan was arranged to ring a number of front-door bells, and Frank was the one selected to do the ringing, and was to join the others in the running after he had done the mischief. He thought it was great sport at the first house when he heard the waiting maid scold at "those boys." At the second house a man came to the door and chased them for a block; Frank only escaped him by dodging under a fence. But at the third house a lame girl came to the door; she had limped down two flights of stairs to answer the false call at the bell. When she heard the boys'

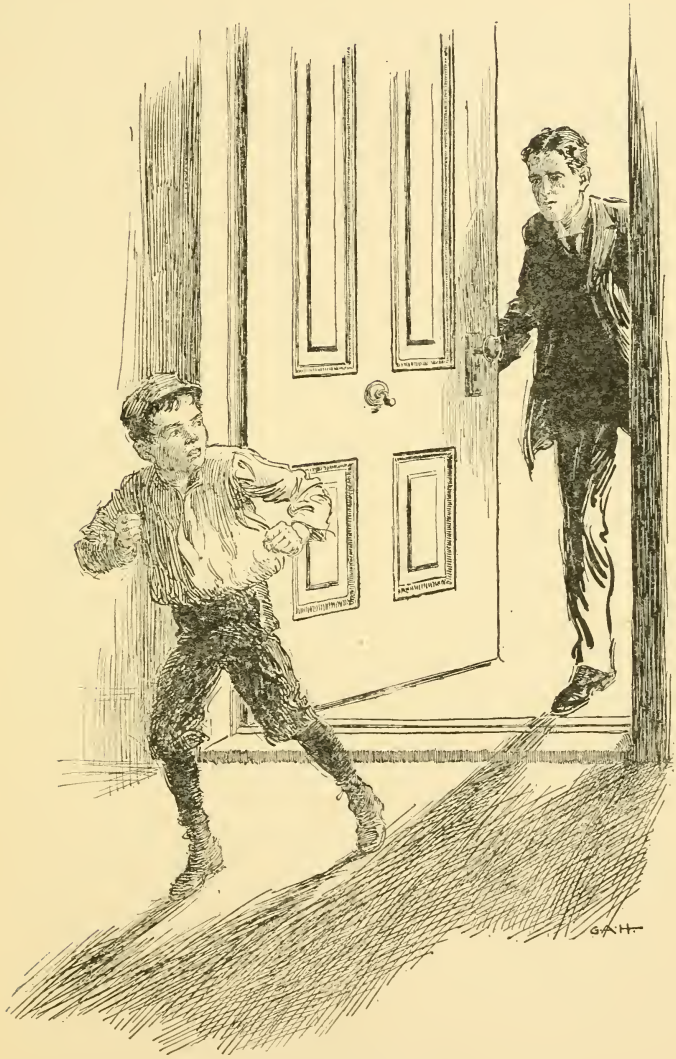
laughter, she stood a moment in the doorway. "They wouldn't laugh," she said, "if they knew how it hurts me to go up and down those stairs."

At the next house Frank had bad luck. The bell was answered almost instantly by a young man who had been on the lookout and who, when he saw Frank running up the street, chased him. The young man was a good runner, too, and overhauled the boy before he could slide under any fences. Seizing Frank by the collar the young man led him back to the house where the bell had last been rung. And all the way back the other boys kept shouting at Frank from behind trees or fences: "You'll catch it:" "Sorry for you, Sammy:" "Good enough for you, Slowlegs."

The young man led Frank into the house and brought him before the whole family in the sitting room, — a gentleman and his wife, and a boy and girl of about Frank's age.

"What have you there?" laughed the gentleman. The boy laughed too, but the lady only smiled sadly, while the little girl looked shyly and not unkindly at the unwilling visitor.

"I caught him;" breathlessly answered the young



THE RUNAWAY RING.

man who held Frank tightly by the arm. "He ran pretty well too."

"But what are you going to do with him now you have caught him?" asked the other gentleman taking his own boy on his lap.

"I am going to use him to show our own little boy that it isn't as good fun to run the streets as he has been thinking." Then, turning to Frank who was trying to hide his face, he said: —

"Look up here, young fellow. Nobody is going to hurt you if you tell the truth. Tell us now: Is it good fun running the streets?"

"No, sir;" whimpered Frank. "It's no fun at all."

"Hear that, Donald?" said the young man who still held Frank by the arm.

Then he asked Frank another question. "Would you rather stay indoors and do as your mother wanted you to do, if you had a home and a mother like Donald's here?"

At this Frank burst into tears, and Donald's mother promptly interfered. "Poor little boy;" she said. "You shall not torment him. You didn't mean to make us trouble, did you, little boy?" she added to the small prisoner. She took charge of him

herself, then, and only let him go when his pockets were filled with cookies and two beautiful big oranges.

Frank wandered about the streets, tired and miserable, for an hour or more until he was sure Sammy's father must be asleep. Then he went home and found Sammy's mother still up, waiting for him.

"How late you are, Sammy;" she said. Then, seeing that the boy had been crying, she added: "What's the matter, Sammy?"

"I was afraid I should be whipped;" he answered, the tears starting again. "Is he asleep?" he whispered.

"Long ago;" laughed the mother. "You aren't usually scared so easily. I wouldn't have let him whip you."

Then Frank took out the good things from his pocket and handed them all to her. "A kind lady gave them to me;" he said.

Pleased at his generosity, the poor woman ate one of the oranges with great satisfaction, but then seemed a little ashamed to have done so. "Eat the other yourself, Sammy."

"I don't want anything;" replied Frank mournfully. "I couldn't eat a mouthful. It would choke

me." Then she took him in her lap and hugged him up to her tired bosom like the true mother she was, and sang a song to him as sweetly as if he were a baby in the softest of linens, and she the finest of fine ladies. When he fell asleep, she undressed him and put him in the little bed with two of his sleeping brothers, took up the lamp and went to her own much-needed rest.

A light touch, or perhaps it was a kiss, wakened Frank, and the fairy was once more by his bedside. He hastily caught her hand lest she should slip away again before she had answered all the questions he could think of.

"I am not having a good time in Sammy Smith's place;" he said. "I don't see how it was that he always seemed to be so jolly."

The fairy stroked the boy's hand for comfort as she said: "Why, Sammy had as good times as you used to think he had. But they were different good times from those you have been used to."

"But how can he like what he has to eat, or endure the dirt in his home?"

"That is what he is used to. Perhaps he wouldn't enjoy your home as much as you did."

"And then he is ragged, and hasn't a nice bed like mine, and his mother doesn't love him as mine does me, and it isn't any fun running wild as he does;" ran on the boy.

"You are mistaken, Frank," replied the fairy, "if you think that Sammy's mother doesn't love him as much as your mother did you."

Frank swallowed a sob as the fairy used the word "did."

"But she has so much work to do that she can't spend the time with him that your mother did with you."

There was that terrible "did" again.

"You must remember that he has always been used to being dirty and ragged, and doesn't mind it as you do. It doesn't make him unhappy. The only thing which really makes him unhappy is what makes all boys, and grown people, too, unhappy, — that is doing wrong. You might try to be a better boy than Sammy was."

Then the fairy was gone.

Frank did not cry any more, but tried to think over what the fairy had said, and to remember that it was not what he had, but what he did, which made

the difference between being happy and unhappy. Soon the little pilgrim fell asleep again, and he could not have slept better if he had been the son of the richest man in the town, lying on a brass bedstead, beneath a silk quilt and a lace canopy.

Sammy's father had gone to his work long before Frank awoke in the morning, and his brothers and sisters had all eaten their breakfast; Sammy's mother was standing by his bedside with the remaining orange in her hand. "Eat this," she said, "and hurry with your breakfast or you will be late to school."

In a few minutes more he was in the street and on the way to school with the other neighborhood boys.

"Let's play 'hookey';" said one of them. "The river is just right for swimming."

"Yes;" agreed another. "What's the use of being cooped up in that schoolroom all the forenoon?"

Frank thought if there was any fun left in being poor Sammy he would like to have it now. Besides, he had always wanted to go in swimming, and his own mother would not permit him, saying he was too little. He knew it was wrong to run away from school, but as long as Sammy was in the

habit of doing things that were wrong, Frank excused his conscience as well as he could and ran off with his ragged companions, all of whom certainly looked as if they needed a bath.

The river was, indeed, tempting enough; — the water so clear that one could see the pebbles on the bottom where the depth was several times over his head, and yet as he looked sidewise along its surface he saw the most charming reflection of the blue sky and fleecy white clouds, or near the banks, of the leaves and branches of overhanging trees. It did not take these boys long to throw off the few clothes they wore. There were no shoes to unbutton, no stockings to pull off, no collars or neckties to delay them. In less than two minutes the last of them was in the water.

They all knew how to swim. Even Frank, who had never been in any water deeper than a bath-tub, found he could swim very nicely. Of course it was only natural that he should be able to swim as long as he was now in Sammy Smith's place. But, instead of coming out of the water when they should have done, the boys were having such a good time that they stayed in until they grew blue about the

mouth and finger-tips. All of a sudden Frank, who was farthest out in the river, felt a terrible pain in his legs and found he could not move them. He screamed loudly, twice, and then sank down, down out of sight. He came up again, but only to swallow a quantity of water and sink a second time. He now recalled all his life before, the unkindnesses he had been guilty of, the times he had been envious and sullen, selfish or greedy, every little falsehood he had told; he thought last of his own dear mother; and then he knew no more until he found himself on the bank being rubbed by two men whom he had never seen before.

"He is all right now;" said one of the men. "I really thought he would never open his eyes again." They had happened along in a boat just as Frank went down for the last time, and one of them dived for him. It was a narrow escape for the boy, indeed.

In a few minutes more he was trudging wearily back toward Sammy's house, going over in his own mind the unhappiness which had come to him because he had not been satisfied with his own home and all that his own loving father and mother had done for him.

"Oh, I wish I were my own self at my own home again;" he moaned.

And on the instant he was dressed in the old way, and just climbing the steps of his own beloved home. He had used his last wish in the wisest way, and, when he opened his own door and found his own dear mother waiting for him with her own sweet smile on her face, he rushed into her arms and kissed and hugged her as if he would never stop.

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